

**THE STUDY OF HINDU RIGHT WING IN PUNJAB:
A CASE STUDY OF RASHTRIYA SWYAMSEVAK SANGH
FROM 1935-1984**

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Preface

This thesis is an attempt to trace and comprehend the history of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Punjab; socially, politically and communally, the most dynamic region of India. My interest in this organization and making it as the topic of research arose from the widespread popularity and notoriety it has earned all over India and perhaps in the world as an agency of Hindu nationalism. The critics and admirers of the RSS who with its pantheon of affiliates have spread their tentacles in almost every field of Hindu national life and has assumed the form of an extended family called '*Sangh Parivar*' are not bereft of casting it in positive and negative hues. The detractors of 'Hindutva', an ideology espoused by the RSS, are increasingly getting wary of the growing RSS clout and its ability to mobilize the power of a lay Hindu to gain control over the nation and turning it a Hindudom thereby winding up all norms of secularism. The Hindu nationalists and their sympathizers on the contrary believe that *Hindutva* is soul of '*Bharat*' and the cultural nationalism practised and preached by them is the remedy of the ills of India in general and the Hindus in particular. So the pro and anti demagogues of the RSS have contributed fairly towards the subject of Hindu nationalism. Therefore, there is not much left in analyzing the history and ideology of the RSS in the national mainstream.

However, there is no study on the growth of RSS in Punjab, though the studies and researches on other Hindu socio-cultural and political organizations like Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharma movement, Hindu Sabhas and the Bhartiya Jana Sangh have been done. Therefore, I have chosen Punjab as the terrain of my study and the growth of RSS in this volatile region which was once a strong bastion of the Hindu nationhood.

The region of Punjab since immemorially displayed a bewitching sense of succumbing to the minor and sometimes inconsequential issues and at other times exhibiting remarkable resilience belying all hopes of return. Communally speaking, this region was diverse with three sub nationalisms (Muslim, Hindu and Sikh) prospered here without much divisiveness until 1920s; socially speaking, the inter and intra communal societal divisions between castes and classes made it perfect hunting ground for caste chauvinists but still caste conflicts predominantly remained elusive (however the situation changed after independence); yet the culture (*Punjabiya*) remained unifying force for the Punjabis, though it was also marred by the communal undertones which ultimately dismantled it in 1947. So the growth of Hindu right wing organization like the RSS which practise cultural monotheism and apparently leaves little space for accommodation generated my interest in the subject. The time period of my study goes from 1935-36 to 1984. The rationale behind this fixation is the plantation of RSS in Punjab in 1935-36 and 1984, as a watershed year after which the Punjab situation became sensitive, complex and violent due to the separatism and alienation of the Sikh community *vis-à-vis* Indian State. I have moved my research in a definite chronological manner, empirical propriety and honest subjectivity without any ideological compromises. However, the most serious problem with writing a contemporary history is the fact that one himself is the part of it and thus in a course identifies itself with the subject, unwittingly and unconsciously. But in thesis I have taken special cognizance of this aspect.

The thesis starts with an extended introduction, which lays down the synoptic history of the RSS from 1925 to the present times under its various *sarsanghchalak* (chiefs). The rest of the thesis is divided into six chapters, last one being conclusion. The second chapter is about

the history of Punjab from the beginning of 20th century till 1980s in which I have traversed through different social, political and communal landmarks thereby providing the broad overview. This helped me in situating the RSS in Punjab's historical context in the later chapters. The chapter number three deals with origin of the RSS in Punjab and its growth till 1946 i.e. first ten years of the RSS history. This was the time period when the RSS was planted to a relatively unfamiliar region but the bastion of Hindu traditionalism and revivalism in which the Arya Samaj was leading from the front. In this initial period the RSS showed remarkable accommodation and acclimatization and made excellent use of prevailing circumstances and ideological infrastructure.

The fourth chapter (1947-1952) of the thesis is perhaps the most interesting and inciting because it covers that crucial time period of the Indian history when its tryst with destiny was marred by its 'tryst with fate'. Liberation and partition were the two sides of 1947 during which the latter one was dominated totally by the communal frenzy. The RSS was an active collaborator in both ways i.e. in saving their coreligionists and providing them with succour and hunting out the Muslims whom they considered the culprits of that mayhem. Their role in this phase of history made them a force to reckon with but simultaneously making them greatest villain of the India due to their alleged complicity in Gandhi's murder. The fifth chapter (1953-1966) is about the readjustment of the RSS in changed circumstances of Punjab where once it enjoyed large support. The response to new demographic equations and the socio-political issues of Punjab forms crux of this chapter which was hallmarked by its second division i.e. between Punjab and Haryana. The two wars that India fought with her neighbours *i.e.* China (1962) and Pakistan (1965) and the response of the RSS towards these is also pondered upon. The sixth

chapter attempts to delineate the history of the RSS from (1967-1984) i.e. the period dotted by the events and issues like Bangladesh liberation war (1972), Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1972), Internal Emergency (1975), formation of Janta alliance (1977), its breakup in 1980 and the rise of militancy in Punjab. How RSS reacted to these is detailed in this chapter.

This is a difficult topic to work on, as it is politically very touchy. It excites strong opinions either criticizing and condemning the RSS or praising and appreciating it. I have tried by utmost best to steer clear from such strong opinions I neither accepts them nor rejects them, because from both sides I have been able to extract something worthwhile. In so far, as I have been able to follow an existing paradigm of research. I have been very impressed by the suggestions given out by Jacques Derrida that an appropriate way of reading against the grain would be to maintain a strategy of deference which brings together strands deferring towards the text; respecting its meanings for what they are; and simultaneously differing from the text enough to maintain a critical difference.

Further, there was an issue about the historical documents giving information about the RSS. While there was lot of critical material available in the public domain about how malignant and obnoxious the RSS is/was, as also available was the RSS's own opinion that all its critics were wrong. This self-opinion secured it to gain further strength in the period after the demolition of Babri Masjid soon after which BJP came to electoral power. The difficult task before me was to obtain information from the RSS's own sources and that task was made possible by my old family connections with the RSS which gave me bother less access to the material. In the end I can only say that what 'I intend to write is Truth'.

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My sincere thanks are reserved for those leaders and *swayamsevaks* of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its *parivar* who spared their valuable time and provided me with some valuable information and generous hospitality. From the unending list of the names, I would sincerely like to thank Sh. Kashmiri Lal, Sh. D.P.Gupta, Sh. Satish, Sh. Balvir Sharma, late Satpal Kaka, late Vishwanath, Sh. Pramod, Sh. Milind Oke, Sh. Chajju Ram Sab and others whose names do not figure here due to the paucity of space. My gratitude is also due for Prof. Nirmal Singh, head of the History Department, University of Jammu, for his insightful suggestions. I am also grateful to my colleagues namely, Mrs. Jyoti Verma, Dr. Shruti Sharma, Sonia Malhotra and Jagjeet Kaur for their timely help in proof reading the text.

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I would not thank my parents because they are bigger than my gratitude. Rather I would like to pay my deepest respect and reverence in their feet without whom my being is meaningless. To my younger brother Jai who fulfilled all the requisites of a brother without ifs and buts, I express my brotherly gratitude. I dedicate this work to them.

Chandigarh

 21/10/08
Kanwar Chanderdeep

Glossary of Indian Terms

<i>Akhanda Bharata</i>	Undivided India.
<i>Adivasi</i>	Original inhabitants; tribals.
<i>Advaita</i>	Non duality; its exponent was Shankaracharya.
<i>Ashrama</i>	A religious retreat.
<i>Bhakti</i>	Devotion.
<i>Boudhik</i>	Intellectual training and discourses.
<i>Boudhik pramukh</i>	Chief ideologue in the RSS.
<i>Bhagwa Dhwaj</i>	Saffron flag; guru in the RSS terminology.
<i>Dharma</i>	Moral law which sustains the world's human society and human being.
<i>Shastras</i>	Texts of codified sacred Hindu laws.
<i>Akhara</i>	Wrestling ground.
<i>Bania</i>	Merchant; business man.
<i>Bhajans</i>	Devotional song.
<i>Bharat mata</i>	Mother India.
<i>Dalit</i>	Untouchable.
<i>Dharma yuddha</i>	Holy war.
<i>Ganpati</i>	Name of the Hindu god also called as Ganesha.
<i>Gaumata</i>	Mother cow.
<i>Guru</i>	Teacher.
<i>Hindu rashtra</i>	The Hindu nation.
<i>Hindutva</i>	Hinduness.
<i>Jati</i>	Caste group.
<i>Jawan</i>	Soldier.
<i>Kar sevaks</i>	Temple construction volunteers.
<i>Kirtan</i>	Reciting prayers loudly.

<i>Mandal</i>	Council.
<i>Manusmriti</i>	Ancient Hindu law book containing codes of sage Manu.
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque.
<i>Mohalla</i>	Locality.
<i>Namaz</i>	Muslim prayer.
<i>Panchayat</i>	Village governing body.
<i>Pitrubhoom</i>	Father land or holy land.
<i>Pracharak</i>	Full time RSS worker.
<i>Puja</i>	Hindu worship.
<i>Pundit</i>	Learned Hindu scholar, often Brahmin.
<i>Purdah</i>	Veil; seclusion of women.
<i>Ram Rajya</i>	The rule of Ram; an ideal state.
<i>Ramjanmabhomni</i>	Movement of build a Ram mandir at Ayodhya in place of Babri Masjid at the place of Lord Rama's birth.
<i>Sadhu</i>	Recluse; holyman.
<i>Sadhavi</i>	Female sage
<i>Sammelan</i>	Congregation.
<i>Samskar</i>	Virtuous behaviour.
<i>Sanatan dharma</i>	Hindu traditionalism.
<i>Sanatani</i>	Believer of Sanatan Dharma.
<i>Sangathan</i>	Organization of Hindus.
<i>Sangh parivar</i>	The RSS family of organization.
<i>Sangha</i>	Organization, used by the RSS people for referring to RSS.
<i>Sannyasa</i>	Renunciation from the worldly things.
<i>Sannyasi</i>	Hindu recluse.

<i>Sant</i>	Holyman.
<i>Sarsanghchalak</i>	Chief of the RSS.
<i>Sarvodya</i>	Welfare for all.
<i>Sati</i>	Immolation of widows.
<i>Satyagraha</i>	Truth force.
<i>Seva samiti</i>	Volunteer corps.
<i>Shuddhi</i>	The movement started by the Arya Samaj during 1920s to reconvert those Hindus who had embraced other religions, back to Hinduism.
<i>Swadeshi</i>	Indigenous manufacturing and consumption.
<i>Swayamsevak</i>	RSS volunteer.
<i>Swaraj</i>	Self rule; independence.
<i>Tabligh</i>	Propaganda for conversion to Islam.
<i>Tanzim</i>	Islamic organization.
<i>Ulema</i>	Muslim men of religious learning.
<i>Varna</i>	Vedic fourfold classification of society.
<i>Zamindars</i>	Big landlords.

Chapter – 1

Introduction

The RSS in National and Regional Context.

Origin and Development of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: the Hindu Right.

The study of origin and growth of the Hindu right and particularly the RSS in the historical context is essential to understand its evolution in Punjab. In this chapter an attempt to analyse the socio-political environment in which its foundation was laid and its subsequent evolution during the course of time under various *sarsanghchalaks* (chief of the RSS), has been made. This chapter covers the period from 1920s to 1990s.

The RSS has been identified with the *Hindutva* ideology and culture. The communal climate and deteriorating Hindu-Muslim relations of those times which were further aggravated by the communal riots that spread across the country in 1920s among these two communities was the immediate cause that led to the genesis of this organization. The founders of the RSS viewed that the weakness, meekness and divisions within the Hindu community were the symptoms of these riots. They believed that the lack of cohesion and organization within the Hindu community had led to the increasingly assertive and violent behaviour of the Muslim community. The over-appeasement of a particular community by the Congress and particularly by Gandhi disenchanted Hedgewar founder of the RSS, with the Gandhian tactics. Gandhi's repeated chant of Hindu-Muslim Unity and brotherhood, the provocative behaviour of Moplahs forced Hedgewar to part his ways with the Congress of which he was an

active member upto 1928.¹ He therefore pondered that any successful freedom struggle could be waged if and only if the Hindus become united.

Foundation of RSS

The RSS has been construed by itself since long as the standard-bearer and proponent of the *Hindutva* ideology. In the beginning of 20th century *Shuddhi* versus *Tabligh* and *Sangathan* versus *Tanzeem*, like movements created the conducive atmosphere for the Hindu cultural and traditional organization like RSS to carve a niche in country's socio-cultural arena. The dormant Hindu Mahasabha which was founded in 1915 suddenly charged up which resulted into the creation of various provincial Mahasabhas in Delhi, Punjab, Central Province and Bihar *i.e.* in the areas which were more communally charged up. The Arya Samaj by its aggressive socio-cultural reforms, vehement rehtorics and aggressive propaganda provided a fertile ground for the RSS to originate and subsequently flourish.

The RSS as an organization was established in 1925 at Nagpur on *Vijayadashmi* (Dussehra) day. It owed its origin to Dr. Keshavrao Baliram Hedgewar, a medical professional who abandoned his lucrative career to participate in the freedom struggle. Dr. Hedgewar was born in the Maharashtrian Brahmin family on April 1, 1889 at Nagpur though they originally belonged to Hyderabad State.² After completing the school education, he under the inspiration

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1. Narayan Hari Palkar, *Dr. Hedgewar Charitra*, Lokhit Prakashan, Lucknow, 2000, p. 230.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 24. Also see H.V.Sheshadri (ed.), and B.V. Deshpande and S.R.Ramaswamy (comp.), *Dr. Hedgewar, the Epoch Maker*, Sahitya Sindhu Parkashan, Bangalore, 1981 for details on the early life and the revolutionary activities of Hedgewar and his liaison with Moonje and Savarkar.

of B.S. Moonje, his mentor, went to pursue medicine at National Medical College, Calcutta in 1910. Reportedly, during his six years in Calcutta, he established links with Anushilan Samiti, a revolutionary society based in Bengal.³ Hedgewar returned to Nagpur after completing his education and started practising there, soon to abandon it in favour of political activities.

Keshav's political and ideological values were shaped under the influences of Dr. Moonje and V.D. Savarkar.⁴ The 'Indian War of Independence' by V.D. Savarkar was supposed to have had a great influence on Hedgewar as also former's '*Hindutva*' that advanced the thesis that Hindus were a nation.⁵ Hedgewar's biographer also noted that the young Keshava dreamt of emulating the 17th century Maratha warrior King.⁶ Moreover, he was also influenced by reading Tilak's '*Kesari*'. Thus the ideological construction that Hindus were a nation was one of the cardinal factors that led to the genesis of the RSS.

Hedgewar after his return from Calcutta participated in the Congress politics as a follower of Tilak and even joined national council in Central Province.⁷ The failure of Non-Cooperation

3. N.H.Palkar, op.cit., pp. 60-62, Also see J.A.Curran, Jr., *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics : A Study of the RSS*, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1951, p.9 and Walter K. Andersen 'The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-I: Early concerns.' *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 11, 1972, p. 592.

4. D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, New Delhi Radha Krishan Parkashan, 1979, P. 26.

5. W.K.Andersen and Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi, Vistar 1987, p.33. For Hedgewar's deliberations with Savarkar refer to Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Parkashan, Bombay, 1988, pp. 170, 171.

6. N.H.Palkar, op.cit., p.29.

7. For more details on the early political activities of Dr. Hedgewar and his participation in the Congress session of Nagpur, refer to N.H.Palkar, op.cit., chapter 7.

movement due to the dying of Khilafat agitation profoundly disillusioned him with the Congress in general and politics in particular. He now fully understood that Muslims in India were more concerned with the fate of Turkish Caliphate than with the Indian national movement. The calling off of *Khilafat* agitation from the twin movements led him to the conclusion that the Indian Muslims had proved themselves Muslims first and Indians secondarily.⁸ He accused Muslims for the failure of the Non-Cooperation movement.

Immediate causes for the foundation of RSS :

The entry of Gandhi in the freedom struggle opened out a context in which RSS was to construct its distinctive *Hindutva* ideology because his fasts and vows, his silences, his prayer meetings, his *satyagraha* all appeared to have a familiar resemblance to the *tapasya* of old.⁹ This was the period of escalating Hindu-Muslim violence. The riots at Nagpur proved to be a watershed and thus made Hedgewar to develop a quest and ultimately context for the foundation of the *Sangh* for which Nagpur was destined to play the crucial role.

Mahatma Gandhi's so called appeasement of the Muslims, much to the chagrin of Hindu nationalists, in a reaction, consolidated the Hindu constituency and also created a sense of insecurity among them. These immediate factors disenchanted Hedgewar with the Congress party's tactics of which he was an active member as late as 1928 when he participated in the Congress session at Calcutta.¹⁰ This ultimately shaped Hedgewar's perception.

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8. Pralay Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2002, p.41.
 9. M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Jagrana Parkashan, Bangalore, 1966.
 10. N.H.Palkar, *op.cit.*, p. 230.

In the month of September of the year 1925, on Dussehra day, Hedgewar launched his new movement of Hindu national revitalization. The first participants were recruited largely from the Brahmin locality in Nagpur.¹¹ These participants were expected to attend an *akhara* during the week and take part in cultural, social and political classes on Sunday and Thursday.¹²

Hedgewar wanted to demonstrate the value of discipline among the volunteers and general public. The prescription of ritual cum physical training, a uniform, and lathi instruction among the Hindu middle class youth led to the emergence of the feeling of equality and matching of their manliness *vis-à-vis* British soldiers.¹³ Hedgewar found tremendous, potential in Sister Nivedita's¹⁴ suggestion to the Hindus to congregate and pray daily for fifteen minutes to become an invincible force.¹⁵ So at the inception the *Sangh* was not viewed as a sectoral activity or a movement, but as a dynamic power house energizing every field of the national activity.¹⁶ The *shakha* programme was started in 1926 and the name Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was adopted after considerable deliberations.¹⁷ In 1928, ninety nine young members by administering life oath were accepted into the RSS. The oath was said to be taken before the *Bhagwa Dhwaja*, an ochre colour standard believed to be associated with Shivaji.¹⁸

Evolution of the RSS:

Dr. K.B. Hedgewar 1925 to 1939: Hedgewar's attempt in

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12. Ibid.
 13. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., p. 35, 36.
 14. She was disciple of Swami Vivekananda and an important member of Ramkrishna Mission.
 15. Tapan Basu et al, *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, p.16.
 16. *RSS: Widening Horizons*, Sahitya Sangam, Bangalore, 1992, p.8.
 17. K.R.Malkani, *The R.S.S. Story*, Impex India, Delhi, 1980, p.16.
 18. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit., p.36.

1925 was modest to start with and at outset the activities of the *Sangh* were confined to Nagpur. Quality rather than quantity was the major criterion for selection of the *swayamsevaks* to the *Sangh*. The spread of the RSS in the initial years was therefore, not much impressive. Another important thing in the initial years was the Maharashtrian-Brahmin character of the RSS because early recruitment in the RSS was confined to Maharashtra and most of schoolboys who were admitted were the Brahmins. To reinforce the *shaka* training further Hedgewar organized first training camp in 1927.¹⁹

Hedgewar continued with the Congress despite his total involvement with the RSS. He was reluctant to participate in the Salt *Satyagraha* of 1930 started by Gandhi because he was of the view that work of the RSS might suffer due to it. But still he participated and got nine months imprisonment. After his release from the prison in 1931,²⁰ he devoted himself whole-heartedly towards the growth of the RSS to make it a national level organization. In this project relations of the RSS with the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha helped Dr. Hedgewar to expand its base in other parts of India, particularly, north India.²¹

In early 1930's, the RSS began to spread itself beyond its Marathi speaking base in C.P. Bhai Parmanand, leader of the Arya Samaj in Punjab, invited Hedgewar to Karachi in 1931 to attend the session of Hindu Yuvak Parishad.²² Hedgewar capitalized this opportunity to extend the RSS base in Punjab, Sindh and United

19. Tapan Basu, et al, op.cit., p. 18.

20. For detailed account of Dr. Hedgewar's participation in the Civil-Disobedience movement and his reluctance to grant permission to the *swayamsevaks* for the participation in the *Satyagraha* and his jail activities, refer to chapter 17 and 18 of N.H.Palkar.

21. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p.47.

22. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., p.38.

Provinces.²³ Babarao Savarkar, the brother of V.D. Savarkar helped the RSS to grow in Delhi and Benaras, Parbhakar Balwant Dani and Bhaurao Deoras, who later on became the general secretary and zonal organizer of the RSS respectively, started its work in United Provinces. The RSS progressed so well in North India that in 1937 Hedgewar had to send 10 more organizers to Punjab, Delhi and United Provinces.²⁴

From 1931 to 1933, the number of *shakhas* increased from 60 to 125, and its membership soared to 12,000.²⁵ Hedgewar as master strategist adopted two major strategies for the expansion of RSS in 1930's. Firstly, he focused his attention on the Universities outside Maharashtra, e.g. M.M. Malviya helped him in starting first *shakha* at Benaras Hindu University.²⁶ Secondly, he utilized his links with the Hindu Mahasabha leaders and acquainted them with his volunteers. From 1937 to 1940, the RSS expanded vigorously amidst deteriorating Hindu-Muslim relations. But now, by this period the government too had been watching the RSS closely and started looking suspiciously at its activities. In 1939, the RSS entered the peninsular region of India i.e. in Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Overall by 1939, there were 500 branches and 60,000 members of the RSS and in 1940 it soared to 700 and 80,000, respectively.²⁷

Hedgewar with the passage of time made some changes in the practices and rituals of the *Sangh* because of the opposition from another Hindu organization, the Arya Samaj. As the Arya

23. N.H.Palkar, op.cit., pp294-301.

24. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit., p.38.

25. Ibid.

26. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p.49.

27. 'Memorandum of Government of India', Home Department Intelligence Bureau, No.60-D, Delhi, May 18, 1942. Also, W.K.Andersen, op.cit., p.595.

Samajists had vigorous hold in northern India therefore in order to make the RSS a reckoning force here Hedgewar decided to break way from idolatrous RSS rituals *viz* worship of Hanuman and some other practices.²⁸ The prayer was adopted in Sanskrit in order to make it nationally acceptable.²⁹ By the time Hedgewar died *i.e.* in 1940, the RSS had a nation wide presence except Assam, Orissa and Kashmir. 'I see before my eyes today a miniature Hindu Rashtra', Hedgewar reportedly said in his last speech in OTC at Nagpur in 1940.³⁰

M.S. Golwalkar: Hedgewar's Successor.

Hedgewar died on June 21, 1940, but before his death had nominated M.S. Golwalkar as the next *sarsanghchalak*. Why Golwalkar preferred to others remained a matter of debate as some rumoured that he was not the ultimate choice of Hedgewar.³¹ Though not going into that debate we shall now be discussing the spread of RSS under Golwalkar.

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar was born in 1906 and belonged to a relatively prosperous family as compared to Hedgewar. At the instance of his father he studied Life Sciences at the Benaras Hindu University earning M.Sc. in Biology and also stayed on to teach there. But he had strong leanings towards meditation and religion. His ascetic temperament ultimately forced him to choose a spiritual career and so he left for Bengal to study *yoga* under *Swami* Akhandanand. According to an Indologist, Keonraad Elst, he was about to be nominated as *Shankracharaya's* successor.³²

Guru Golwalkar, as he was called popularly, first met

28. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p.50.

29. Ibid.

30. N.H.Palkar, op.cit., p.458.

31. *Organiser*, July 14, 1973.

32. K. Elst, *Decolonising the Hindu Mind*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2001, p.145.

Hedgewar at Benaras Hindu University in 1931 that was impressed by this twenty five years old ascetic type teacher and therefore in 1939 he appointed him as the general secretary of the RSS, which was the second most important position in the RSS hierarchy.³³ Golwalkar changed the orientation of the RSS from its paramilitary and militant profile towards a more brahmanical one of cultivating a high moral culture that would gradually transform the Hindu society.³⁴ Emphasizing on cultural and social aspect he refused to support Hindu Mahasabha's call for recruitment of Hindu's in the British army. Due to this the links between Hindu Mahasabha and RSS were virtually got severed. Many *swayamsevaks* defected from the RSS including Nathuram Godse in 1942 due to this reorientation under Golwalkar.³⁵

The RSS under Golwalkar was reluctant to participate in the Civil Disobedience of 1940 and Quit India movement of 1942.³⁶ At the same time some RSS people participated in these movements in their individual capacity.³⁷ Mean while, the RSS continued to expand quietly but rapidly. According to the British records, in 1944 some 76000 men regularly attended the shakas all over India of which most were in the Central Provinces (about half) and rest mainly in Bombay and Punjab.³⁸ But in reality the figure would had been much more than the above mentioned.

From 1945 to 1948, the RSS membership surged and most of the increase occurred in those parts of India that are now in

33. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit., p.41.

34. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p.52.

35. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, p.43.

36. Government of India, 'Home Political (1) File No.28/3/43', National Archives of India, New Delhi.

37. Shri Guruji; *The Man and His Mission: On the Occasion of His 51st Birthday*, Bharat Prakashan, Delhi, 1957, p.33.

38. Ibid.

Pakistan, Punjab and Delhi. Also in these times, the RSS was successful in obtaining boys from the lower castes.³⁹ The post war period witnessed increased communal tension. Direct Action of the Muslim League brought large scale rioting in Calcutta and Punjab. Of the two troubled spots it was in Punjab where RSS was successful in attracting considerable Hindu support.⁴⁰

Independence and Partition:

The independence brought in its wake the partition of India and worst ever communal holocaust. It was in this setting of near anarchy the RSS earned enormous goodwill for itself by assisting Hindu refugees in their migration to India by providing them protection and shelter. At this time even the government sought RSS's help to protect refugees from the other side and so for that matter the RSS organised rescue squads.⁴¹ The Punjab Relief Committee, which was under the RSS control, undertook the relief work among Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan. This image helped the RSS to expand rapidly in Punjab, J&K, Delhi and other places of north India.⁴²

Gandhi's assassination by Nathu Ram Godse, an ex-RSS member on January 30, 1948 brought in its wake the arrest of Golwalkar and banning of the RSS. During the ban time therefore, the RSS had to temporarily suspend its activities though secretly they continued meetings in the guise of study groups, sport associations, prayer meetings and so on. After his release from the prison Golwalkar pleaded to the government of RSS's innocence and

39. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, *op.cit.*, p.45.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, p.48.

42. Pralay Kanungo, *op.cit.*, p.55.

emphasized the non-political character of the organization.⁴³ He further cautioned Nehru and Patel of the communist menace that was looming large to which they jointly (RSS and Congress) could tackle.⁴⁴ The RSS launched *satyagrah* in December 1948 and also carried out a signature campaign and mustered support of some 9 lac people to sought revocation of the ban.⁴⁵ Ultimately, with much negotiations and G.D. Birla's mediation the RSS agreed on framing a written constitution of its organization. Maulichandra Sharma, Eknath Ranade and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya wrote the draft which was ultimately accepted by the government and the ban was lifted on July 11, 1949.⁴⁶

Political Activism: The Bhartiya Jana Sangh.

In October 1949, the Congress adopted a resolution in which it was decided that members of the RSS could join the Congress. But later on, the Congress working Committee rescinded this earlier decision and ruled that the RSS people could join Congress only after giving up their primary membership of the RSS.⁴⁷ This stance of the Congress forced the RSS to seriously think of other options *i.e.* launching of some political front. There was also internal bickering among the RSS leaders regarding their entry into the politics. Activists, who constituted the younger lot, advocated the need of entry into politics while the traditional ones didn't approve the move. The most notable advocates of the RSS entry into the politics were C. Parmeswaran, Balraj Madhok and K.R. Malkani who wrote

43. The parleys between Golwalkar and the Government during the ban period are mentioned in the RSS pamphlet, *Justice on Trial: A Collection of Historic letters between Sri Guruji and the Government (1948-1949)*, Prakashan Vibhag, Mangalore, 1958.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

45. Pralay Kanungo, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

46. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, *op.cit.*, pp. 53-55.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 56.

series of articles in the '*Organiser*'⁴⁸ favouring their approach despite the fact that new constitution of the RSS denied any such role.⁴⁹ Finally, a new party was floated under the name of Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS) by 'partyless leader' S.P. Mookerjee and a 'leaderless party', the RSS.⁵⁰ Madhok and Malkani prepared the draft of the new political party. Guru Golwalkar refused the entry of RSS to the new party but lent some staunch and tried workers of the RSS to work for it.⁵¹

Consolidation of the RSS and its Expansion:

The consolidation process inside the RSS started after the lifting of ban and furthered after the formation of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh. Golwalkar viewed that in order to achieve its objective the RSS had to sharpen its ideology and organisation. So during this phase the RSS participated into various philanthropic activities, notably among these were the "*Bhoodan* movement" of Vinoba Bhave in 1949, rehabilitation of people who had migrated to India from East Bengal in 1950, large scale relief work during the Assam earthquake's aftermath in 1950 and participation of the *swayamsevaks* in liberation of Dadar and Nagar Haveli in 1954.⁵² Eknath Ranade, who was appointed as the general secretary of the RSS in 1956, greatly consolidated it by discontinuing the lending of the *swayamsevaks* to its affiliates. This period of consolidation ended in 1962. But again the voice for involvement of the RSS workers in its affiliates started gaining momentum because some important leaders viewed that the

48. The RSS mouthpiece magazine started in 1947 from New Delhi.

49. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p. 56.

50. Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 54.

51. Ibid, p. 65.

52. H.V. Sheshadri, *RSS: A Vision in Action*, Jagrana Parkashan, Bangalore, 1987, Chapter 1 and 10.

future of affiliates was looking bleak without the backing of RSS *pracharaks*. So again, the RSS reverted to its old policy and the activist brothers, Bala Saheb Deoras, was appointed as the assistant general secretary and Bhaurao Deoras, as northern zonal *pracharak*.⁵³ According to Andersen and Damle, the main reason of this change in policy was due the enhanced respectability of the RSS, and it was dramatically demonstrated by the permission of government for the RSS to participate in Republic Day parade in 1963.⁵⁴ The RSS also benefited from the nationalistic wave sweeping the nation after the Chinese war in 1962 and this was amply demonstrated by the surge in RSS membership during these years.

In the aftermath of the foundation of the VHP in 1964, the RSS further strengthened its base amidst the Hindu community, though in politics it was still fighting hard to gain ascendancy over the Congress. Meanwhile, it continued with its character building activities like, in 1963 to commemorate *Swami Vivekananda's* birth centenary, the RSS leadership decided to bring out a collection of Vivekananda's writings.⁵⁵ Simultaneously, the RSS continued to expand during this period and in the wars of 1965 and 1971 against Pakistan the work of RSS was appreciable. The RSS's involvement in social work whenever there was any calamity in any part of the country further increased its clout. The year 1967 witnessed the dawn of a new era of Indian political life. The non-Congress opposition parties challenged the supremacy of the Congress for the first time. In the lok sabha elections of 1967 BJS captured 35 seats, with more impressive

53. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, pp. 113.

54. Ibid.

55. H.V.Sheshadri, op.cit., p.268.

performance in the north Indian states.⁵⁶ The RSS at this juncture adopted flexible approach and allowed the BJS to share power with opposition parties. Though the experiment was short lived yet the RSS tasted political power for the first time.⁵⁷

In 1971 the RSS supported Indira Gandhi's call of facing Pakistan challenge unitedly. It at this juncture praised the unparalleled heroism and acumen of the armed forces and the firm leadership of the Prime Minister.⁵⁸ Guru Golwalkar died in 1973 but not before making the RSS a country wide organization which was spreading its ideology through its sister organizations. During his 33 year tenure as the *sarsanghchalak* he not only sharpened the *Hindutva* ideology of the RSS but also consolidated it enormously by the establishment of its two most important affiliates, the BJS in 1951 and the VHP in 1964. His emphasis on *sangathan* and *pracharak* system made saffron brotherhood a formidable force in the times to come. The saintly style of Golwalkar coupled with his ascetic leanings had reflected in the RSS's orientation during all these years. What I mean to say is that, his self abnegation for politics was discernible in the RSS strategies during his long tenure. This specific attitude of the RSS from the British times till his death reflected in the organization's relation *vis-à-vis* political dispensation. To quote few examples, the RSS complied with the British diktats when prohibitory orders were issued regarding against it, then during Mahatma's murder it only passively resisted the government's onslaught and latest during the end of his tenure *i.e.*

56. For detailed analytical view of Jana Sangh's electoral performances from 1952 to 1967 see Craig Baxter, *op.cit.* and for 1967 election specific information refer to Chapter XI of the said book.

57. Pralay Kanungo, *op.cit.*, p.59.

58. *Organiser*, December 25, 1971. Golwalkar and Deoras sent congratulatory telegrams to the Prime Minister.

during the Punjabi *Suba* agitation when Golwalkar cleared the air by asking the Punjabi Hindus to accept Punjabi as their mother tongue (details in chapter 5). These issues which confronted the RSS from time to time explicitly showed its reluctance to dabble whole heartedly in the politics and its preference for low profile.

Golwalkar's death was mourned by all and sundry of the politics, his admirers and his critics.⁵⁹ The president of India V.V.Giri, lok sabha speaker Gurdial Singh Dhillon condole his death. Indira Gandhi, otherwise one of his greatest critics, said in the parliament that Golwalkar, who was not the member of the parliament was an honourable personality and his belief in his ideas made him one of the most important figures of the national life. Similarly, the Marxist leader Taqi Rehman and Congressite Hafizudin Qureshi too expressed their grief and said that Golwalkar was not anti Muslim as was widely believed. Jai Prakash Narayan said that Guruji was the spiritual figure who awakened the spirit of true nationalism in the youth.

RSS under Balasaheb Deoras:

Balasaheb Deoras was appointed by Golwalkar as the new *sarsanghchalak* according to his wish before his death which he had conveyed to his *swayamsevak* brothers in three sealed letters.⁶⁰ Deoras gave new reorientation to the RSS by making it work for the national reconstruction. He was practical and pragmatic man without any taboos regarding rites and rituals.⁶¹ He provided strategy and planning to the organization and helped it to grow like a phenomenon. He divided the areas of work between the RSS and its affiliates and reiterated his commitment to Golwalkar's *Hindu Rashtra*. Unlike

59. This list of obituaries is detailed in M.L.Virman (ed.), *Shri Guruji Punjab Mein*, Vishwa Samvad Kendra, Jalandhar, 2006, pp. 65.

60. *Organiser*, June 16, 1973.

61. *Organiser*, June 23, 1973.

Golwalkar he had no inclination towards the spiritual and no inhibition towards politics.⁶² RSS in 1975 supporting the call from Jai Prakash Narayan plunged itself in the anti-Emergency struggle against Indira regime Jai Prakash too praised the RSS at this juncture for its national reconstruction and denied any fascist charge on it.⁶³ The RSS during the Emergency formed Lok Sangharash Samiti to coordinate the activities of the JP movement. During the course of the J.P. movement Nana Deshmukh, an important RSS ideologue, became its general secretary. In the course of events the RSS was banned on July 4, 1975 and the large numbers of RSS members were arrested. During this period till the formation of Janta alliance in 1977, the RSS carried out underground activities against the Emergency. But according to few critics the RSS hideously supported Indira Gandhi.⁶⁴ But still, predominantly, it is believed, that the RSS worked against the Emergency regime and played a crucial role in the debacle of Congress and formation of the Janta government after 1977 elections.

Outside the political battle field the RSS experienced a surge in its membership. The RSS general secretary had reported that the number of *shakhas* increased to 17,000 by 1981, from 11,000 in 1977.⁶⁵ During this time even the RSS affiliates expanded rapidly e.g. Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh's membership rose from 1.2 million in 1977 to 1.8 million in 1980, making it a second largest trade union after Indian Trade Union Congress (ITUC) and the Vidayarthi Parishad registered growth from 170 000 in 1977 to 250,000 in 1982.⁶⁶

62. 'Hindus are Problems of Hindusthan: Sarsanghchalak's Penetrating Analysis of the Current Situation', *Organiser*, November 17, 1973.

63. *Organiser*, June 24, 1975.

64. D.R. Goyal.

65. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit., p.215.

66. Ibid.

During the time of Deoras' *sarsanghchalakship* another important development took place and that was RSS's opening of its door to the non-Hindus. This attitude transformation of the RSS may perhaps be due to the changing circumstances and probably also due to the advice of respected national figures like Jai Prakash Narayan who advised the RSS to shun its exclusive character.⁶⁷ But still Deoras maintained that they had not shunned their traditional revivalist goals.⁶⁸ The political experience and new strategy of the RSS made itself and its affiliates known throughout the country and its leadership acquired respect and stature of the dimension perhaps only next to the Congress.

The last significant and probably the most important development in the RSS history and its tryst with politics happened in 1980. This was the birth of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). This party was the new avtar of the erstwhile Jana Sangh but with modern outlook and new faces. Again, the RSS was instrumental in the foundation of the BJP. The RSS with changed strategies tried to give the new organization an ideological mixture in the form of *Hindu Rashtra* and Gandhian Socialism.⁶⁹ Deoras too at this time proudly claimed that they were the real followers of the Gandhiji's principle of tolerance and non-violence.⁷⁰ This may perhaps be due to the compulsions of the BJP to portray itself as the legitimate successor of Jai Prakash Narayan's idealism. A.B. Vajpayee was selected as the new president

67. *Organiser*, October 3, 1977.

68. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, *op.cit.*, p.223.

69. Though the word Socialism aroused criticism within the new party and some of its members objected its use because of its akinness to Marxism. But later on these bickerings subsided and it was cleared that the BJP's Socialism has an Indian content. For more details refer to *Times of India*, December 7, 1980.

70. Pralay Kanungo, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

and a Muslim, Sikandar Bhakt was made one of its general secretary.⁷¹

Even though the fall of the Janta government in 1979 had led the RSS to rethink its strategies and for many like Nana Deshmukh this had led to disenchantment with the politics as traditional element of the RSS always demanding distance from politics.⁷² The formation of the BJP prompted the RSS again to undertake some active participation in the politics for the sake of this new affiliate. But, increasingly after 1980s, the RSS had begun to concentrate more on its non-political affiliates because it felt that in order to achieve much talked about unity of the *Hindu Rashtra* these affiliates might prove more important.⁷³ In 1982-83 at Meenakshipuram the conversion of some low caste Hindus to Islam created a furore in the RSS circles which led them to raise the bogey of Hinduism in danger. VHP was the main player during this movement against religious conversions and the RSS had to assist it during its *Ekmata Yatra* campaign. In Punjab, the RSS took steps to diffuse the Hindu-Sikh tensions by retorting that they consider Sikhs as the part of the Hindu community, but the Punjab problem was too complex to be solved by this simple assertion. The period of late 1980's and early 1990's witnessed widespread communalization of the social and political fields with the incidents ranging from Shah Bano affair, to the secessionist movements in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, to Ayodhya imbroglio. The Hindu majoritarianism of the RSS therefore had traversed a long way from being a cult of Hindu nationalists to a strong authoritarian democratic movement (by the agency of its affiliates).

Bala Saheb Deoras continued till 1994 and then retired

71. Times of India, April 7, 1980.

72. *Organiser*, April 16, 1980.

73. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit., p. 237.

from the active RSS work thereby handing over the mantle to Rajinder Singh alias Rajju Bhaiyya. This was unprecedented move, as earlier successions had taken place only after the death of reigning *sarsanghchalak* but Deoras retired himself during his active lifetime citing health reasons. In 2000 A.D. K.S. Sudarshan was nominated as the new *sarsanghchalak*, again replacing alive though ailing Rajinder Singh, the predecessor. However, these developments in the RSS are beyond the scope of my current research topic which as the title suggests ends in 1984. The coming parts of this chapter will be including the affiliates (*Sangh Parivar*), structure, training and ideology of the RSS.

THE *SANGH PARIVAR*: AFFILIATES OF RSS

The RSS functions on the assumption that Indian society needs to be revitalized and for this purpose it has identified various spheres of national life for '*Sarvangeen Unnati*' or all round development of the nation. The *swayamsevaks* have entered the diverse fields of socio – political and economic life for that purpose. For that matter, therefore, the RSS has established various affiliates or we can say such organizations, which have been inspired by the RSS ideology. These organizations broadly constitute what came to be known as *Sangh Parivar*.⁷⁴

The RSS is like a big Banyan tree and its organizations are like the branches and roots of the tree.⁷⁵ Today, the *Sangh Parivar* is not just a national phenomenon but has grown into a gigantic network of organizations which have their roots not only in India but also in different parts of the world. To start with the

74. K.Jaya Prasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism: Inroads in Leftist Stronghold*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep, 1991, p. 206.

75. Parvathy Appaiah, *Hindutva: Ideology and Politics*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 2003, p.107.

publishing houses and press, the other wings of RSS includes international front organizations, religio-political organizations, educational organizations, tribal, social service, women affiliates, student organizations, religious organizations, agrarian and labour organizations, cultural-intellectual organizations and community based organizations. The number of affiliates under different aspects of the national life is large and some of them are not widely known and publicized, therefore a lay person has little knowledge of them and their work. According to an RSS publication, “(...) without the knowledge of the different kinds of activities of the *swayamsevaks*, the introduction of the RSS is incomplete. Keeping this in mind it has been attempted in this book to produce the brief information about the diverse activities of the *swayamsevaks* (...) we believe that this book will prove to be of use for those who want to understand the RSS along with the *swayamsevaks*.”⁷⁶ A brief description of these affiliates, therefore, is as under.

Publication houses affiliated to the RSS: The first non-traditional area of work that RSS treaded into was the print media. The RSS leadership was reluctant to publicise its activities since its inception. But soon after the World War II, the activist *pracharks* began to use print media to publicise its position on the partition and communal question. They argued that the RSS message had not been reaching the Hindus and therefore there was a need of some ideology articulator to spread their message. However, the RSS leadership didn't agree to the direct participation of the RSS in publications but

76. Sadanad Damodar Sapre, *Paramvaibhav Ke Path Par*, Suruchi Prakashan, Delhi, 1997, p.7.

This information about the RSS affiliates is generated largely from this text along with several other basic texts on the R.S.S. and from its official website - <http://www.rss.org/parivar>

they consented to the creation of trusts, which would publish newspapers and journals.⁷⁷ In 1946 thus, *swayamsevaks* began the selling of shares of the Bharat Parkashan Trust. The trust by this way raised nearly 4 lac rupees and with this amount, *Organiser*, an English periodical was started in the capital on July 3, 1947.⁷⁸ The earlier issues of the *Organiser* focused mainly on the partition of India.

In 1948 a ban was imposed on the RSS after Mahatma Gandhi's murder and the Congress party too banned its members from participating in the activities of the RSS. So, now the RSS activists increasingly started demanding a network of newspapers and journals which could present the case of the RSS before public and therefore communicate with them effectively. Thus during the ban *Panchjanya* in Hindi and *Rashtra Shakti* in Marathi, were established. In the following decade trusts were formed to publish journals and newspapers in almost twelve vernacular languages. The additional staff and reporters were largely recruited from the RSS. The RSS activists were also responsible for the establishment of first vernacular news service called Hindustan Samachar. All these efforts of the *Sangh* therefore substantially contributed towards the publicity of its ideology to various nooks and corners of the country.

Detailed list of publishing houses, dailies, weeklies, periodicals, journals and newspapers is given below. This list is illustrative and extensive though not exhaustive and intensive as there might be other small time publications which are remotely known and therefore of less consequence.

77. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit., p.115.

78. Ibid.

Publishing Houses:

- 1) Rasthrothana Sahitya (Kannada)
- 2) Jagrana Parkashan (Kannada/English)
- 3) Rashtriya Dharma Prakashan (Hindi)
- 4) Jana Gana Prakashan (Hindi)
- 5) Suruchi Prakashan (English/Hindi)
- 6) Kurukshetra Prakashan (Malyalam)
- 7) Nava Bharti Prakashan (Teulgu)
- 8) Baba Saheb Apte Samark Samiti (Hindi/Marathi)
- 9) Sahitya Sangam (RSS Publications/Hindi)
- 10) Bhartiya Vichar Sadhana (Hindi)
- 11) Akashvani Prakashan (Hindi/Jalandhar)
- 12) Bharat Prakashan (Hindi/English)
- 13) Lokhit Prakashan (Hindi/English)
- 14) Gyan Ganga Prakashan (Hindi)
- 15) Archana Prakashan (Hindi)
- 16) Sadhana Prakashan (Hindi/English)

Press:

A. Dailies:

- 1) *Swadeshi* (Hindi)
- 2) *Yugdharma* (Hindi)
- 3) *Vir Arjun* (Hindi)
- 4) *Taruna Bharat* (Marathi)
- 5) *Janma Bhoomi* (Malyalam)
- 6) *Mother Land* (English)

B. Weeklies:

- 1) *Panchjanya* (Hindi)
- 2) *Organiser* (English)
- 3) *Sadhana* (Gujarati)
- 4) *Hindu* (Kannada)

- 5) *Vikram* (Kannada)
- 6) *Vivek* (Kannada)
- 7) *Kesari* (Malyalam)
- 8) *Vivek* (Marathi)
- 9) *Vijaya Bharatham* (Tamil)
- 10) *Rashtradeep* (Oriya)
- 11) *Swasthik* (Bengali)
- 12) *Alok* (Assamese)
- 13) *Jagruthi* (Telugu)

C. Periodicals:

- 1) *Jagrit* (English/Fortnightly)
- 2) *Ekta* (Marathi/Monthly)
- 3) *Jahanavi* (Hindi/Monthly)
- 4) *Rashtra Dharam* (Hindi/Fortnightly)
- 5) *Tarundeep* (Hindi/Monthly)
- 6) *Pragathi* (Malyalam/Quarterly)
- 7) *Vrithhanthan* (Malyalam/Fortnightly)
- 8) *Pathik Sandesh* (Hindi/Monthly)
- 9) *Trikuta Sandesh* (Hindi/Monthly)

D. Newspapers:

- 1) *Manthana* (Hindi)
- 2) *Pungara* (Kannada)
- 3) *Yugabodha* (Hindi)
- 4) *Sanskritivarta Patra* (Marathi)
- 5) *Rashtradeva* (Hindi)
- 6) *Jana Surathi* (Hindi)
- 7) *Patha Sanketa* (Hindi)
- 8) *Patheya Kana* (Hindi)
- 9) *Hindustan Calling* (English/Hindi)
- 10) *Deshiya Samachar* (English)

- 11) *Mathru Archana* (Telgu)
- 12) *Sangha Sandesh* (Hindi)
- 13) *Vidyarthi Patra* (Kannada)
- 14) *Aagami* (Hindi)
- 15) *About us* (English)
- 16) *BJP Samachar* (English)
- 17) *Seva Samarpan* (Hindi)
- 18) *Vana Bandhu* (Hindi)

International based affiliates of the *Sangh*: The prominent branches of the RSS on international level include the following organizations:

- a. **Bharat Vikas Parishad**: It is a socio-cultural, non political organization started in 1963, at New Delhi by Suraj Parkash and Lala Hans Raj Gupta, the then mayor of Delhi. It has 12 branches in other countries *viz* USA, Canada, Holland, UK and Nepal. Besides propagating *Sangh's* ideology abroad, this organization is also involved in the philanthropic activities like Vikalang Punarvas Yojana, Vanvasi Kalyan Yojana and Health and Environment Yojana. In India this organisation has almost 500 branches spread through out the country.
- b. **Hindu Students Council**: In the late 1980's a group of young students thought of organising a forum to promote Hindu culture and to serve humanity. So this organization came into existence in May 1990.⁷⁹ The Hindu Students Council is the largest Hindu student organization in the world with 35 chapters in USA and Canada.⁸⁰ Global Hindu Youth Activities Network is a project of Hindu Student Council to establish communication and coordination among the Hindu youth in the world. This organization also brings out, *Samskar*, a quarterly newsletter and has its network of sister organisations in

79. Organiser, July 2, 1995.

80. Ibid.

South Africa, Fiji, UK, Netherlands and Kenya, besides India.⁸¹

c. **Vishwa Vibhag:** The efforts to establish this organization was initiated by Bhaurao Deoras some fifty years ago by touring different countries which had substantial Hindu population.⁸² To coordinate the activities of the RSS branches in these countries a unit at Delhi was established and was named as Vishwa Vibhag. Today, the Vishwa Vibhag looks after the activities of the *Sangh* in more than hundred countries. In Kenya its branch is called as Bhartiya Swayamsevak Sangh; in Nepal, Matrubhoomi Sangh; in Burma, Sanatan Dharma Swayamsevak Sangh; in Mauritius, Swayamsevak Sangh. But the most frequently used name of this organisation is the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh. A newsletter published by this organization called *Samvad* (fortnightly) is circulated in most of the countries where the RSS has its presence.⁸³

Political Affiliates of the RSS: The Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS):

From its inception the RSS had an ambivalent attitude regarding party politics. After independence the activist *pracharak* started demanding some kind of RSS's involvement in the politics. So the RSS responded positively to Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's, Bhartiya Jana Sangh. Though apparently outside the party, the RSS commanded moral influence over it. But it was true that in the formative phases of the Jana Sangh neither RSS nor Mookerjee looked Jana Sangh as an affiliate of the RSS. Therefore, officially, the RSS didn't form the party but the RSS cadre formed the foundation of Jana Sangh.⁸⁴ Golwalkar

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid., May 7, 1995. It was reported in this issue how first shakha was established outside India on a ship when the members of the RSS fraternity were traveling in a steamer bound for Kenya.

83. Ibid.

84. See K. Jaya Prasad, op.cit., p.84.

sent staunch and tried workers from the RSS on deputation to the Jana Sangh.⁸⁵ But both (the RSS and the Jana Sangh) had decided their relationship on equal footing and thus retained their independent existences.

After intermittent successes and failures, the BJS succeeded in forming government with the aid of other anti Congress parties under the name of Janta Party in 1977 lok sabha elections. Morarji Desai, the prime minister, included Jana Sangh members to his cabinet namely A. B. Vajpayee who was included as the information and Broadcasting minister and Brij Lal Verma as the Minister of industry. Even though the RSS played an important role in the formation of Janta Party Government, but Lok Dal and the Socialists objected to dual membership with the RSS of the Janta Party members. Internal bickerings till the end ultimately led to the untimely collapse of the Janta Party government in 1980 and thus brought re-elections. If we glance into the performance of BJS in the electoral politics we can say that its performance was satisfactory considering the fact that Indian political scene was strongly dominated by the Congress.⁸⁶

The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP):

The modern avtar of erstwhile Bhartiya Jana Sangh, the

85. 'A tribute to Dr. Shyama Prasad: How Jana Sangh was born', *Organiser*, June 25, 1956.

86. For exhaustive details on the origin, ideology and electoral performance of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh see, Craig Baxter, *Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1969; Geetha Puri, *Bhartiya Jana Sangh : Organisation and Ideology*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1980; Balraj Madhok, *Why Jan Sangh*, Popular Parkashan, Bombay, 1967 and Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics : The Origins and Development of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh*, Cambridge South Asian Series, 1993.

BJP is the current political ideological articulator of the *Sangh*, though both have denied such relation. It was born in 1980 after the fall of Janta Party government and A.B. Vajpayee was elected as its first president at Bombay Conclave. Though ideologically, the new party was similar to that of Bhartiya Jana Sangh, yet Vajpayee tried to co-opt Jai Prakash Narayan's, Gandhian socialism and current BJS's ideology of Integral Humanism given by Deendayal Upadhyaya, into its new charter.⁸⁷ Moreover, this party diluted some what exclusionary stance of the BJS and choose several non – BJS figures in its working committee *e.g.*, as mentioned earlier one of its general secretaries, Sikander Bhakt, was a Muslim. Thus benefiting from liberal *Hindutva* image, the RSS background and various socio religious issues *viz* reservation and *Ramjanma Bhoomi* agitation, party took a big leap forward in electoral arena from just 2 seats in 1984 to 182 seats in 1999 elections and forming NDA government of which BJP itself was the major constituent. The BJP since its birth strived to dispel the label of fundamentalist and therefore tried to project a version of accommodative and secular *Hindutva*.⁸⁸

The minor political affiliates of RSS and constituents of BJP are:

- (1) Bhartiya Janta Yuva Morcha
- (2) Bharitya Mahila Morcha
- (3) Bhartiya Labour Union
- (4) Bhartiya Vidyarthi Morcha

Religious affiliates of the RSS:

Guru Golwalkar in order to combat the divisions within the Hindu religion and to control mutual bickerings among them

87. Parvathy Appaiah, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

88. N.K.Singh, 'Hindu divided family', in *India Today*, December 15, 1996, p.69.

floated the idea of a united platform of the Hindus. Moreover, a scare in the RSS circles of religious conversions and depleting Hindu population forced its leadership to go ahead with the idea of establishing an organization which could unify various Hindu sects and movements. In August 1964, therefore, he organised a meeting with the select group of religious leaders in Bombay to form the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) with Shiv Shankar Apte, an RSS *pracharak*, as its general secretary.⁸⁹

The three main objectives of the new organization as specified by the delegates were:

- (a) to consolidate and strengthen Hindu society;
- (b) to protect and spread Hindu values, ethical and spiritual and to make them relevant in contemporary society;
- (c) to establish and strengthen the links among Hindus living in different countries.⁹⁰

The VHP though had limited success in establishing a common Hindu doctrinal corpus but it did give an opportunity to the RSS to identify itself with the Hindu ecclesiastical community. From 1964 to 1980 VHP consolidated itself and after that till now it is very much active. One of the most cherished aims of the VHP is the reconversion of converted Christians and Muslims back to the

89. *Organiser* (Diwali Special Issue, 1964) p.15.

90. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., p.133. Also see Peter van der Veer, 'Hindu Nationalism and the Discourse of Modernity : the Vishwa Hindu Parishad', in Martin E. Marty and R.Scott Appleby, (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms : The Dynamic Character of Movements, Volume 4*, University of Chicago Press, 1994. Peter van der Veer in his another work lucidly describes various factors like colonialism, ritual discourse and practice, communication, linguistics and cult objects, archaeology, literature and television which accounted for resuscitating Hindu and Muslim nationalisms apart from strictly religious ones; see his, *Religious Nationalism : Hindus and Muslims in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

Hinduism. VHP came to prominence during the *Ramjanma Bhoomi* and *Babri Masjid* issue and launched a campaign to construct the Ram temple at Ayodhya.

VHP under its umbrella has a youth wing called Bajrang Dal and Women's wing called Matrishakti. It also has various service departments, *e.g.*, department to deal with cow protection, Matrimandal to work for aged women, harijan and tribal departments *etc.* It has *Marga Darshak Mandal*, a forum of religious leaders and policy makers which in 1982 established *Dharma Sansad*.

The other minor religious constituents of *Sangh Parivar* are:

- (a) Virat Hindu Samaj
- (b) Vishal Hindu Sammelan
- (c) Hindu Samajosav

Social service affiliates of the RSS:

Seva Bharti is a foremost voluntary organization of the RSS, which has been devoted towards social upliftment of the poor and needy. This organization has adopted number of slum clusters (*bastis*) for their upliftment. Its main aim is to make needy and particularly the women, self-supporting and independent. The Seva Bharti has undertaken projects on health, education and financial independence besides running crèches, libraries, coaching centers, tailoring classes, adult education centers and other technical training centres among poor and destitute to enable them to live with dignity.

Other organisations of the likes of Seva Bharti are:

- (a) Abhalashrama: Meant for providing help to the abandoned, widows and children.
- (b) All India Grahak Panchayat: It is an organisation of consumers started in Pune. Now extended to all parts of the country, it was instrumental in getting

Consumer Protection Act, 1986 passed by the Indian parliament.

- (c) Vivekananda Medical Mission.
- (d) Bhartiya Kushta Nivaraka Sangh.
- (e) Akhil Bhartiya Dhrishtihin Kalyan Sangh.

Student affiliate of the RSS

Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)⁹¹ : During the ban period *swayamsevaks* established wide variety of organizations such as devotional groups, sport clubs, student associations and so on, to sustain group solidarity. The students were perhaps the most active organizers during the ban period and many of the front groups were established on the campuses itself. Hedgewar himself had recognized the potential of the students.

Even prior to the World War II many student *swayamsevaks* had been participating in the activities of All India Student Federation. But in 1940 AISF got split into two factions, of which one was pro communists, All India Student Federation and the other pro Congress, All India Students Congress (AISC). Most of the RSS members choose the latter. The 1948-49 ban on the RSS provided the students with ample opportunities to organize. So the first student group formed during the ban was at Delhi University and later on similar pattern in other campuses also. Balraj Madhok, a young RSS *pracharak* and a college teacher was most active among the Punjab students and thus became instrumental in the foundation of the upcoming student body.

91. *Organiser*, November 6, 1948. In this issue the immediate causes responsible for the foundation of this organization were mentioned along with organization's philosophical inheritance from the RSS.

In July 1948, therefore, some student organizers, all from the RSS background, met in Delhi to draw a constitution for the newly organised union which came to be known as Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad. Most of the presidents of the ABVP were teachers.⁹² In 1970s and particularly during the J.P. movement, the ABVP played a significant role and became a strong force in the college campuses. Today it is the largest and most active student group in India. Its activities are not limited to the campuses but it also undertakes several constructive projects like Student's Experience in Interstate Living, Vacation Employment Bureau, Students for Rural Reconstruction, *etc.*⁹³

The major stated objectives of the ABVP are: To create a country wide organization of students on democratic basis; to work for all round development and welfare of the students; to promote national character and discipline among the students; to promote constructive activities in social and cultural sphere and to disseminate political education; to utilize students' energies for the nation building activities; to promote progressive outlook among the students and to work for overall progress of the country in keeping with the cultural heritage of the land; to eradicate provincialism, sectarianism and similar other disintegrating forces by making students alive to the fundamental unity of national life.⁹⁴

From the objectives of the ABVP influence of the RSS ideology is quite discernible and therefore the Parishad conducts number of activities to make students aware of the RSS worldview.

92. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, *op.cit.*, p.119.

93. K Jaya Parsad, *op.cit.*, p. 216.

94. ABVP Constitution, Article 3, Also see ABVP's website, www.abvp.org.

The RSS Affiliated Agrarian and Labour Unions:

A. Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS): This labour affiliate of the RSS was founded by Dattopant Thengadi on July 23, 1955 at Bhopal, who wanted to evolve such an organization which would project 'Bhartiya Vision' in its thoughts, programmes, slogans and symbols.⁹⁵ According to its founder, the ideology of the BMS rests upon the concept of industrial family and on the concept that every right is accompanied by a corresponding duty. Harmony not conflict is its view.⁹⁶ This organization for many years worked without national executive *i.e.* the leadership experimented of building the organisation from the grass root level.⁹⁷

BMS expanded on fast pace after the Indo-China War and according to the Labour Ministry report, it is number one labour union in the country.⁹⁸ Instead of Labour Day (1 May), the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh celebrates *Vishwa Karma* Day, which is an Indian concept. They are the strong supporters of *swadeshi* and opposed to fast globalization. The slogan of BMS is 'Workers Unite the World' as against the Marxist slogan, 'Workers of the World Unite'.⁹⁹

B. Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS): In rural India neither the RSS and nor its affiliates have been successful in garnering support, though efforts had been made. For that purpose Bhartiya Kisan

95. D.B.Thengadi, *The Onward March of Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh*, BMS Central Office, New Delhi, 1985, p.1. Also see K. Saxena, 'The Hindu Trade Union Movement in India - The Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh', *Asian Survey*, 33(7), July 1993, p. 687.

96. H.V. Sheshadri, *op.cit.*, p. 243.

97. K. Jaya Prasad, *op.cit.*, p. 212.

98. Report cited in *Organiser*, January 12, 1997. Its membership was reported at 3116564, ahead of INTUC's 2692388 and CITU's 1775220.

99. *Organiser*, October 29, 1995.

Sangh was formed by the *swayamsevaks* under the auspices of D.P. Thengadi on March 4, 1979, on non political basis.¹⁰⁰ The aim as stated by the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh is not only to improve the material condition of agriculturists, but also to work for their all round development. It undertakes training classes for the farmers and has also organized successful agitations. In short, it believes in the concept of agricultural family without class cleavages and it not only thinks of its interests but also broods for the country's interest as well.

Educational Affiliates of the RSS:

Vidya Bharti: It was founded in 1977 by the RSS to set up a model Bhartiya system of education. Today it is one of the biggest educational institutions in the world.¹⁰¹ Vidya Bharti works on its own and besides the Indian and Hindu values, its curriculum is in consonance with modern system of education. The Shiksha Vikas Parishad is branch of the Vidya Bharti which works in various states. For primary and secondary levels, the Saraswati Shishu Mandirs are established. It has made itself practically available almost in every town of India. Reportedly its membership included 14000 educational institutions, 73000 teachers and 17 lakh students.¹⁰²

Bhartiya Shikshan Mandal: It was founded in 1969 by the *swayamsevak* teachers inspired with the mission of infusing *Bhartiya* content in the education system.¹⁰³ This organization makes a critical review of all the text books. Now days they have launched a campaign

100. http://www.rss.org/new_RSS/Parivar/History.jsp.

Also see H.V.Sheshadri, op.cit., P.247.

101. *Organiser*, November 19, 1978.

102. http://www.rss.org.8080/New_RSS/Parivar/History.jsp.

103. Parvathy Appaiah, op.cit., P.118.

to mobilize public opinion regarding content of various text books.

Other educational organisations of comparatively less importance are:

- (a) Vishwa Samskrita Partisthan.
- (b) Bhartiya Vidya Niketan.
- (c) Madhyamik Shikshak Sangh.
- (d) Prathamik Shikshak Sangh.
- (e) College Shikshak Sangh.

Cultural and Intellectual Affiliates of RSS:

- I. Deendayal Research Institute: This institute with its headquarters at New Delhi was setup in 1972 and has taken a lead in the propagation of Hindu national views and values. It carries on research, publication and other academic programmes and has maintained a huge library with books on subjects like culture, religion, development *etc.*¹⁰⁴ It publishes a quarterly research journal entitled '*Manthan*', in Hindi and English. In 1977, a model village called 'Deendayal Puram' was established in Andhra Pradesh in the cyclone-affected area which is pursued, monitored and coordinated by this institute.¹⁰⁵
- II. Samskar Bharti: This organization was formally formed on January 1, 1981, though its work had been started since 1954. The idea of its foundation was conceived by the group *swayamsevaks* who were gifted with some artistic talent. The main strength behind the Samskar Bharti was V.S. Walwankar, a *swayamsevak* and a renowned archaeologist.¹⁰⁶ The two main objectives of this organization are; to promote originality,

104. H.V. Sheshadri, *op.cit.*, p. 255.

105. *Ibid.*, p.175.

106. *Ibid.*, p.237.

creativity, social and educative content of art and to realise in man that nature is a greatest piece of art. The motto is the fulfillment of the concept of '*Satyam Sivam Sundram*'. It is poised for further growth with the backing of famous personalities.

- II. Bhartiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti: ¹⁰⁷ The Bhartiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana was the project started in the memory of Baba Saheb Apte, a pioneer of the *Sangh*. The speciality of this *Yojana* lies in its efforts towards rewriting a chronological 'authentic' national history of India. The *Samiti* performs functions like releasing books, organising seminars, conferences and holding discussions.
- III. Prajana Bharti: It is an intellectual organization and has a science wing called Viganan Bharti. It wants science to be taught religiously and religion scientifically.
- IV. Akhil Bhartiya Abhivakta Parishad: ¹⁰⁸ It was founded in 1992 at New Delhi by the lawyers assembled from the different parts of the country. They resolved to make sustained efforts for evolving a judicial system commensurate with the Indian ethos and to provide free legal aid to poor litigants. The prominent legal luminaries associated with this body included justice H.R.Khanna, justice E.V.Ramaiya, justice Ramajois, justice Jitenderveer Gupta, justice Guman Lal Lodha, justice U.R.Lalit and senior advocate Ram Jethmalani.

Other smaller cultural and intellectual organizations are:

- 1) Tapasya
- 2) Vivekandanda Kendra

107. http://www.rss.org.8080/New_RSS/Parivar/History.jsp.

108. Ibid., Also see Parvathy Appaiah, op.cit., p.121.

- 3) Bhartiya Vichar Kendra
- 4) Yoga Shema
- 5) Mandar

Economic Fronts of the RSS:

- I. Swadeshi Jagrana Manch: ¹⁰⁹ This organisation was founded for the propagation of indigenous goods and products. It is an economic forum of the RSS which is fighting against what it considers a threat to the Indian economy from the developed world's capitalist order including WTO and GATT. Muralidhar Rao was one of the organising secretaries of this organization.
- II. Laghu Udyog Bharti: This organization is meant for the help of small-scale industries, which it considers vital for the economic self-reliance of the country. It demands concessions for the small scale sector from the purview of central excise and ESI.

Women Affiliates of the RSS:

- I. Rashtriya Sevika Samiti: It is one of the oldest organizations of the RSS and was founded long back in 1936 by Lakshmi Bai Kelkar, twelve years after the foundation of the parent organization. In 1947, the *Samiti* had 240 *shakhas* and 13,000 members. ¹¹⁰ In 1996 there were about 3000 branches of the *Samiti* in India. ¹¹¹ Rashtriya Sevika Samiti usually keeps low profile with its growth being low and confined mostly to the middle classes. The objective of the *Samiti* is the all round

109. Organiser, July 4, 1993.

110. Organiser, November 3, 1996.

111. Ibid., For critical study of Rashtriya Sevika Samiti and its role in the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement see, Tanika Sarkar, 'The Woman as Communal Subject : Rashtriya Sevika Samiti and Ram Janmabhoomi Movement', in Economic and Political Weekly, XXVI (35), August 31, 1991, p.2058.

development of the women in all walks of national life. The *Sangh* and the *Samiti* work on parallel lines. Their connection is very strong through family ties ¹¹² because most of *sevikas* came from the households having RSS background.

- II. Bhartiya Stri Vidya Niketan: This was established in 1932 to impart specialized education to women through *Grahani Vidyalyas*.
- III. Durga Vahini: Though an RSS affiliate, this women wing has more closeness towards the VHP. It trains young girls for socio-religious duties and work for raising women out of four walls of the house thus to make them work for nation building. *Sadhvi* Rithambra was one of the most popular national conveners of the Durga Vahini. ¹¹³

RSS Affiliates Working Among Tribals:

- I. Bhartiya Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (BVKA): It was founded at Jashpur in Madhya Pradesh in 1950s and later on expanded to other states in 1960s. It was a national organization set up to work among the tribals and Ramakant Keshav Deshpande, one of the most capable RSS worker was made its incharge in 1952. ¹¹⁴ At present this organization had its branches in around 21 states. Tribals are one of the most socially and economically backward people in India and therefore the Hindu nationalists

112. op.cit., p.81.

113. Rithambra, A *Sadhvi* who along Uma Bharti, took active part in the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation. With their fiery speeches, chauvinistic metaphors they went a long way in mobilising a big chunk of Hindu women for this movement. Rithambra now is leading a life of a spiritual and religious master by discoursing on Hindu religion and philosophy in India and abroad, Uma Bharti has parted her way from BJP and has raised her own outfit called Bhartiya Jana Shakti Party active mostly in Madhya Pradesh.

114. C. Jafferlot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India, 1925 to the 1990s*, Viking Penguin India, New Delhi, 1996.

believe that they are easy prey of conversions. So the stated purpose of BVKA is to counter this threat and further help in improving the living conditions of the tribals by making their all round development. 'Bhartiya Jana Sanskar Manch' is an off-shoot of Vanavasi Kalyan Parishad.¹¹⁵

II. Adivasi Sangham

Community Based Affiliates of the RSS:

I. Rashtriya Sikh Sangat:¹¹⁶ This organization was founded for fostering brotherhood and community bonds between the Hindus and the Sikhs. In the wake of Punjab terrorism, the RSS and tried to bring moderate Sikhs into its *Hindutva* fold so that the separatist tendencies within this community could be countered. This organization, therefore, emerged in November 1986 at Amristar and uptill now is working for spreading the message of *Gurus* and *Gurubani* among the people. Its first national and international coordinator was Shamsheer Singh. Its other important leaders were Chiranjiv Singh and Gurcharan Singh who is also its present president. Having nationalist outlook, this organization treats Sikhs as the part of Hindu religion and asserts that Sikhism had been founded for the protection of Hinduism. But this claim of *Sangat* indulged it into various controversies from time to time, as orthodox Sikhs consider it as interference in their religion and therefore blasphemy.

II. Bhartiya Sindhu Sabha: A Bombay based organization of Sindhis was founded by L.K. Advani in April 1979. The aim of this

115. D.D. Pattanaik, *Hindu Nationalism in India: Modern Trends*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1998, p. 201.

116. <http://www.sangatsansar.com>.

organization is to bring Sindhis on a single platform and to propagate Sindhi language culture, festivals and traditions. Various philanthropic works for the Sindhi people are undertaken by it *viz.* running health clubs, medical check up centres, blood donation camps, book banks, vocational guidance bureaus and marriage information centres.¹¹⁷

II. Children Based Organisations:

- I. Bala Gokulam: For ennobling the young minds this organization had been founded for the children. Most of its activities have religious outlook and takes place in some temple premises. On *Janmashtami*, Bala Gokulam organises functions and festivities.
- II. Saraswati Shishu Mandir: These are nursery schools for the children and were founded in 1952 at Gorakhpur in UP to inculcate, knowledge, discipline, moral values, patriotic outlook and other Hindu principles, *i.e.* to develop holistic Hindu outlook among the kids.

Miscellaneous Organizations:

- I. Sahakar Bharti: Several *Sangh* workers have taken to the cooperative field, so to further this purpose, in 1978, Sahakar Bharti was founded. It involves direct participation of the common man so as to channelise people's initiative and energy for all around economic and social development.¹¹⁸
- II. Poorva Sainik Seva Parishad: It was started in UP in 1992 for the welfare of ex-soldiers and to use patriotism, ability and discipline of these ex-servicemen for the national cause.¹¹⁹

117. Parvathy Appaiah, *op.cit.*, pp.125-126. Also see *Organiser*, May 13, 2007.

118. H.V. Sheshadri, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

119. Parvathy Appaiah, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

Organizational structure and training:

organised and strictly disciplined body of men who are up on making socio-cultural revolution happen in the nation. The motive behind the foundation of RSS was to strengthen the Hindu nation in the form of *sanghathan* and to inculcate Hindu *samskars*. So for this very purpose an institution of *shakha* was developed, which also happens to be the basic unit of the RSS. Another equally important aspect of the *Sangh* is its system of *pracharaks* and the real structural power in the RSS resides with them. This refers that the organisational structure of the RSS and its training methods are carefully designed to reinforce its ideology.

Shakhas

It is a daily gathering of the *swayamsevaks* and an instrument for organizing Hindu community. According to Golwalkar, 'the real spirit of our work will be understood when one comes in contact with the *shakha*'.¹²⁰ Its membership varies from 50-100 males who gather at a particular place daily. At the *shakha*, mental and physical character of the participants is developed by indulging them in different physical games, holding discussions on moral stories, chanting prayers and saluting *Bhagwa Dhwaja* (Saffron Flag) before dispersing. The *shakha* training sometimes show its akinness to the *akharas*, but this resemblance to the *akharas* of yester years is only formal, with the *akharas* concentrated on the physical fitness whereas *shakhas* on the cultivation of mind.¹²¹

In the *shakhas*, the *swayamsevaks* are under the

120. M.S.Golwalkar, Bunch of Thoughts, Jagrana Prakashan, Bangalore, 1980, p. 512.

121. C.Jafferlot, op.cit., p. 38.

leadership of *gatanayak* and the *shikshak*. They are appointed by the *mukhya shikshak*, whose authority is real though the *de-jure* power is exercised by the *karyavah* (secretary) who use to be the older and respected member of the area. The *gatanayak* and the *shikshak* usually meet local *pracharks* every ten to fifteen days to discuss attendance, programmes, working and other activities of the *shakha* and miscellaneous social and political issues confronting the nation. Most of the areas have their own *karyalaya* (office). The *shakhas* are divided into four different age groups of the *swayamsevaks* namely: (1) *Shishu swayamsevaks* 6-10 years (2) *Bal swayamsevaks* 10-14 years (3) *Taruna swayamsevaks* 14-28 years, (4) *Proudha swayamsevaks* – 28 years and above.¹²²

Golwalkar referred to the activities of *shakha* as *sadhana*. According to the RSS, the purpose of the *shakha* is two fold – continuity and conviction.¹²³ Golwalkar viewed *shakha*, as the living practice of principles and not a bundle of dry preaching.¹²⁴ The RSS *shakhas* have been experiencing an upward trend over the period of time. At its inception in 1925 there were only 5 *shakhas* and now their number have swollen to staggering 48,329 till January 2004 and these were being held at 33,758 places.¹²⁵

The *Pracharak*:

The real power in the RSS structure resides with the *pracharaks*, who form a communication network outside the constitutional system. The RSS constitution defines them as unpaid, full time workers of high integrity whose mission is to serve society

122. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., p.84.

123. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p.73.

124. M.S.Golwalkar, op.cit., p. 513.

125. Shamsul Islam, *Religious Dimensions of Indian Nationalism: A study of RSS*, Media House, Delhi, 2006, p.14.

through the *Sangh* and who, of their own free will have dedicated themselves to the cause.¹²⁶ Most of the *pracharaks* are recruited by the state (*prantiya*) *pracharak* in consultation with the local officials who know about him. However, the ultimate power of their placement lies with the *sarkaryavah* (the national general secretary). During the probation period for one or two years these *pracharaks* are referred to as *vistaraks*. A typical *pracharak* is recruited in his early twenties. He has to be well-educated and well versed in Hindi and English, besides the language of area in which he is supposed to work. The life style of a *pracharak* is very simplistic consisting of a vegetarian diet and attiring in purely Indian dress *i.e.* *kurta, pyjama, dhoti, etc.* Hedgewar had once called on the *pracharaks* to 'become *sadhus* first'.¹²⁷ So the *pracharaks* generally practise celibacy during their tenures.

However, with the passing times and changing mindsets, many *pracharaks* now emulate modern life styles and desire more for comforts. According to Andersen and Damle, 'about one half of those we met stated that they intend to return to secular world'.¹²⁸ The job of a *pracharak* is very hard and one can say that he has to be mentally ascetic while dealing with day-to-day activities of physical and material world. The RSS is conscious of this dilemma and so it has been taken various steps to combat it and keeping the morale of

126. Article 17 of the RSS Constitution.

127. Cited in M.S.Golwalkar, *op.cit.*, p.368.

128. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

pracharaks high. ¹²⁹ The continuous and rigorous ideological training of the *pracharaks*, their meetings with older the *pracharaks*, *karyakartas* and others is undertaken by the *Sangh* to cure this problem. But on the whole we can say that the *Pracharak* system is backbone of the RSS network and it owes its spread and strengthening to this world denouncer activist.

The RSS Hierarchy: ¹³⁰

Local: The hierarchy in the RSS is pyramidal. Above the *shakha* there is a *mandal* committee composed of the representatives of three or four *shakhas* of a given locality. Ten to twelve *mandals* form *nagar* committees *i.e.* at city level nearly all the day-to-day activities of the *Sangh* at this level take place at the *nagar* committee. The city committee consists of *sanghchalak* who is analogous to the *karyavaha* in the *shakha* and different head of departments *viz.* physical (*sharirik*) training, intellectual training (*boudhik*), recruitment (*sampark*), finance (*nidhi*) and service (*seva*). The committee holds weekly meetings and its decisions are percolated down the order through *karyavah* who usually presides over the deliberations. Above the *mandal* committees there are *zilla* (district) and *vibhag* (regional) committees.

Provincial:

At the provincial (*prantiya*) level the RSS bodies are

129. Now the *pracharaks* are travelling in A.C. compartments of trains, using mobile phones, provided with motorbikes for *prachar*. This may partially be attributed to the modernisation process and partially to the RSS's tryst with politics. More importantly, the new generation leadership of the RSS's political affiliate BJP who had been in the RSS once, now are leaning more towards five star culture. This indirectly has affected the psyche of the young recruits of the RSS who are drawing themselves more towards the political activism.

130. See Articles 7-19 of the RSS constitution for greater understanding of the RSS's hierarchical order and division of duties among the various units of hierarchy.

called as *prantiya pratinidhi sabhas*. These are deliberative bodies and carry no real power. This *sabha* consists of one elected delegate for every fifty voting *swayamsevaks*. Also, according to the RSS constitution *prant sanghchalak* has to be elected by this assembly who in turn elects lower office bearers. But practically they do not have much say in the day-to-day activities of the RSS and the position is more of an honorary type as the chosen *sanghchalak* is usually a respectable and influential person of the area.

National: *Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha*¹³¹ is the national level assembly and meets at least once a year. It is presided over by the *sarkaryavah* (general secretary). The participants in this assembly are selected by the *prantiya sabhas*, *prant sanghchalaks*, *prant Pracharaks* and the members of the central executive. Like the state assemblies, this body too doesn't wield any effective power though the constitution of the RSS gives it effective supervisory power according to which it shall review the work and lay down the policy and programmes of the *Sangh*. The real power is actually exercised by the *sarkaryavah* and the *Kendriya Karyakari Mandal* (central working committee).

Sarsanghchalak:¹³²

At the summit of the RSS hierarchy there is *sarsanghchalak* who is chosen and nominated by his predecessor. The RSS constitution describes him as the supreme 'Guide and Philosopher'. Dr. Hedgewar became *sarsanghchalak* in 1929 and he nominated M.S. Golwalkar before his death in 1940. In 1973 Balasaheb Deoras became *sarsanghchalak* and then Rajendra Singh became the chief in 1993. He (*sarsanghchalak*) may attend, summon or address

131. See Article 15 of the RSS Constitution.

132. See Article 12 of the RSS Constitution.

any assembly of the *swayamsevaks*, *pratinidhi*, *karyakari mandals* etc. severally or jointly.

It is true that the *sarsanghchalak* is a supreme authority in the organisation but he generally doesn't intervene in day-to-day matters. In everyday affairs most of the administrative functions are left to the *sarkaryavah* and *Kendriya Karyakari Mandal*. The election for the successor never took place in the RSS, as they regard it as disruptive process in a highly organized and centralised organisation. No RSS leader ever publically questions the appointment of the leader by his predecessor. Moreover, one important change that took place during Deoras' tenure was his appointment of Rajendra Singh as the chief before his death *i.e.* during his lifetime he relinquished the post of the *sarsanghchalak* and same was done to Sudershan, the present chief. It is also a norm that the general secretary is usually acknowledged as the likely successor of the organization. The unquestionable authority enjoyed by the *sarsanghchalak* prompts critics of the *Sangh* to describe it as an authoritarian and fascist organisation. But the RSS people themselves do not describe it as such and say that it is a model of an ideal Hindu family.¹³³

RSS Training:¹³⁴

The *shakha* which is the breeding ground of the *swayamsevaks* who with the passage of time and by the dint of their work gradually move up in the hierarchical order. The character building is one of the most important aspects of the RSS training which further aims at developing the sense of one community and single brotherhood among the *swayamsevaks*.

As we have already mentioned that *shakha* consists of

133. Pralay Kanungo, op.cit., p.76.

134. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., pp. 89-92.

four sets of the *swayamsevaks* i.e. *shishu*, *bal*, *tarun* and *proudh*. They assemble in an open ground and play the games like *Kabbadi*, *Kho-kho* etc. and participate in the discussions on various socio-political issues of national and communal importance. Before dispersing they chant prayer (*Namaste sada vatstle matrubomi...*) in front of the *Bhagwa Dhwaj* (saffron flag) with right hand on chest, palm downwards parallel to the ground and head bowed. They consider flag as their *guru*. It is important to note that bhagwa dhwaj had been associated with the Maratha warrior, Shivaji and the RSS leadership, which was overwhelmingly Maharashtrian during earlier years, borrowed it and honoured it as a symbol of the 'Nation God'. These *swayamsevaks* at the end of the prayer shout *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* (Victory to Mother India). All these activities referred to as *Sadhana*.

RSS Training Camps: ¹³⁵

Over and above the *shakha* programmes, RSS conducts various training camps to further the indoctrination process which begins with participation in the *shakhas*. These camps are divided into three categories. The first is Instructors Training Camp (ITC), which is usually managed by the *nagar* committees and meant primarily for the older members and thus stresses upon intellectual aspects. These are held during the winters for about fifteen days. Second category is of three-day camp, which is organized throughout the year. Students, businessmen and other professionals of different sorts are the main participants of these camps. Officer's Training Camps (OTC) is of third category and perhaps the most important. This camp is of one month's duration and held every year in different parts of the country

135. <http://www.rss.org>. Also see W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., pp. 94, 95 and C.Jafferlot, pp. 40 and 65.

there are three stages of this camp and the final stage is conducted at Nagpur. Most of the trainees in these camps are between fifteen and twenty-five years of age.

According to J.A. Curran Jr., the motive behind these camps is two fold. First, in these camps the participants are indoctrinated with heavy doses of the *Sangh's* ideology than those they got in the *shakhas*. Here they also go through tougher physical training. Secondly, in these camps the *swayamsevaks* assemble from different regions of the country and therefore get an opportunity to come closer to the fellow *swayamsevaks* and thus overcoming the narrow feelings of parochialism, casteism, groupism and so on.¹³⁶ The participants of the OTC are assigned to *ganas* which are directed by *ganapramukhs* (instructors). He is responsible for the intellectual (*boudhik*) and physical (*sharirik*) classes which forms curriculum of the camp.¹³⁷

RSS Festivals:¹³⁸

Besides *shakhas* and periodic training camps, the festivals celebrated by the RSS further strengthen the fraternal bonds among them. Every year RSS celebrates six festivals. They are:

1. The Hindu New Year (*Varsha – Pratipad*) begins their festival season and the New Year. Supposedly at this time, Yudhishtira and Vikramaditya started the old Hindu calendar year and Rama too was crowned on this day. Also the day coincide with Hedgewar's birthday and so sometimes it is also celebrated as Founder's Day.

136. J.A.Curran, Jr., op.cit., p. 50.

137. More details of the OTC are described in Chapter 3 with personal example of the *swayamsevaks*.

138. Interview with Kashmiri Lal, former *Prant Pracharak* on February 25, 2006, at Amritsar.

2. The second *utsava* is the coronation celebration of Shivaji (*Hindu Samrajya Divotsava*) which is in one way the celebration of Hindu victory over the Mughal or Muslim rule.
3. *Rakshabandhan* in August is third festival of the RSS. Traditionally, this is the north Indian festival, which is celebrated to assert affection between brother and sister. But in the RSS jargon, *swayamsevaks* tie rakhi to each other and thus reminding themselves the duty of sacrifice to protect the honour of Hindu society. *Boudhiks* are held on this occasion to emphasize the ties of kinship among the fellow *swayamsevaks*.
4. The fourth festival is *Vyas Puja* or *Guru Dakshina* which is celebrated in September. On this day '*Bhagwa Dhvaj*' is worshipped and the members make anonymous donations towards the *Sangh*. These donations are the source of funds for the organization the records of which are not maintained.
5. *Vijayadashmi* or Dussehra is the fifth festival in the RSS calender and is celebrated with more pomp and show than any other festival. It is the commemoration of Lord Rama's victory over Ravana. Drills and marches are undertaken by the RSS through the cities and towns on this occasion. Some well-known person from the area presides over the function. The *pracharaks* begin the festivities with *shastra puja* once associated with Shivaji. The RSS band plays martial music and the assembled *swayamsevaks* sing patriotic songs. Various other skills of the *swayamsevaks* are also displayed to mark the festival.
6. Festive season of RSS concludes with the last festival of *Makarsakranti* i.e. winter solstice. It is the festival of personal renunciation and service to the nation. Sweets are distributed among the *swayamsevaks* on this event and integral Hindu nationalism is fostered.

The festivals celebrated by the RSS have direct or for that matter, indirect message hidden in them. One was to demonstrate Hindu solidarity and fraternity to all the communities. Secondly, to cement the organisational bonds among the *swayamsevaks* and thus furthering the goal of the RSS of universal Hindu nation at the apex of civilizational hierarchy.

IDEOLOGY OF *SANGH PARIVAR* OR RSS

According to Clifford Geertz,¹³⁹ belief systems or the ideologies develop in response to the cultural, social and psychological stresses which takes shape when existing designs of authority, power responsibility, civic purpose fails to address and explain the existing situation. Therefore, they took shape and develop in order to provide a blueprint and legitimacy to its actions and motivate activities in order to achieve desired objectives. So to reduce the doubtfulness and ambiguity created by the strains in the society and polity, they (organisations) develop their own belief system which elucidates the existing complexities and tensions thereby simplifying social and political realities or events. The ideology or belief system thus base itself upon reinterpreting traditional cultural features in order to enliven them and simultaneously giving them new meaning and using them as symbolic strategies. This case of the emergence of an ideology by this way aptly explains the emergence of RSS as a *Hindutva* force, which draws liberally from the Hindu past to define and thus construct its belief system.

RSS has been a growing phenomenon all over the country

139. Clifford Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System', in David Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*, Free Press, Glen Well, 1964, p. 53. Also see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*, Basic Books, New York, 1973, p. 230, 231.

and even abroad since its foundation in 1920s. A careful look therefore has to be made on the belief systems of the RSS. The ideology of RSS, according to its ideologues from Hedgewar, Golwalkar to the present chief K.S. Sudershan, is framed by the perception of nation's ills and its remedies thereof. The RSS lays stress upon promoting the Hindu culture as the national culture. They maintain that the Hindus are not the only mainstay of India but they are national spirit and body. The founders of RSS believed that the Hindu social body and mind are both weak and disorganized. Therefore to overcome the said malady, all the diverse groups within the Hindu society are to be weld, revitalized and rejuvenated on the basis of *dharma* and *sanskriti*, so that it may achieve an all side development of the *Hindu Samaj*.¹⁴⁰

The ideology of RSS was influenced from the very beginning by doctrinal concept of *Hindutva*, framed by Veer Savakar.¹⁴¹ Hedgewar was deeply influenced by Savarkar's view on *Hindutva* who considered Hindus, *Hindustan* and *Hindutva* not mere words but a civilization and history. According to him, to be called as Hindu three bonds are necessary first, territorial or *rashtra*, second, race and third, *sanskriti* or culture. So in his views, a Hindu is one whose *punjabhoo* (holyland) and *pitrabhoo* (fatherland) are identical.¹⁴² Golwalkar, the most important ideologue of the RSS

140. See Preamble of the RSS's Constitution.

141. V.D.Savarkar, *Hindutva*, Bhartiya Sahitya Sadan, Delhi, 1989. The first edition of this book came in 1923 and from that time onwards, this doctrinal text helped in strengthening the concept of Hindu Rashtra. Different ideologues from time to time used this work as the basis of their own conceptual understanding of the term Hindu along the works of traditional Hindu ideological forefathers like, Shankracharya, Ramanuj, Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra, Dayanand Saraswati, Rama Krishana Parmahansa, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tilak, Gandhi and Ambedkar.

142. *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 116.

elucidated the concept of *Hindutva* in most elaborate manner. In his books 'We or Our Nationhood Defined' (1939) and 'Bunch of Thoughts' (1966), he upheld Hindu tradition and culture wherein a strong stand against the minorities was adopted.¹⁴³ He emphasised on the values and character of society and gave prominence to the nation rather than state, which he viewed as political object.

After Golwalkar, another RSS great that influenced the RSS ideology and further shaped it was Deendayal Upadhyaya. To the thinking of Savarkar and Golwalkar, he added ethical and moral principles. Besides the characteristics of a nation as mentioned by Savarkar and Golwalkar, he also included soul or '*chiti*'.¹⁴⁴ It is a kind of higher law that takes precedence over any political institutions or manmade rules.¹⁴⁵ According to the *Sangh Parivar*, the integral humanism is essentially consonant with Indian ethos.¹⁴⁶ The individual, family, society, nation and all humanity are linked together. These aspects of belief therefore can also be traced in daily prayer of the RSS which presents the RSS thinking to great extent. So the harmony brought about by the integration of man and nation with humanity, universe and spiritual whole is the essence of '*Ekatama Manavada*'.

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143. M.S.Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, (foreword by M.S.Aney) and *Bunch of Thoughts*, Jagarana Prakashan, Bangalore, 1980 (first published in 1966). The first book self-admittedly was a treatise of Babarao Savarkar's '*Rashtra Mimansa*' (Marathi) and was hurriedly carried out by immature Golwalkar. The later text however, was the compilation of the speeches and writings of Golwalkar. For more insight on *We or Our Nationhood Defined* also refer to Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Parkashan Bombay, 1980, p.527.
144. Deendayal Upadhyaya, *Integral Humanism*, Navchetan Press, Delhi, 1965, p. 52.
145. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55.
146. Gurdas M. Ahuja, *BJP and Indian Politics: Policies and Programmes of the BJP*, Ram Company, New Delhi, 1994, p. 40.

The circumstances leading to the foundation of RSS spelt out the broad parameters for the development of its ideology. The Hindu-Muslim conflictual relations and Hindu nationalist's disenchantment with the Congress policy of appeasement towards the minorities forced the RSS to adopt ultra Hindu ideas providing little space for the minority communities and that too on pre conditions. RSS from the beginning laid stress on promoting Hindu culture as the national culture and the life breath of India. Therefore it laid great stress on character building because they believe that the character and caliber of an average man ultimately decides nation's progress.¹⁴⁷

The ideology of RSS was also affected and influenced by the earlier Hindu socio-religious reform movements like Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharama movements and more particularly by the ideas of Swami Vivekananda. Though these movements were limited to the socio-religious fields yet the implications of their teachings and ideas were much profound on socio-political scenario of the country. The RSS being originated in a vicious atmosphere of 1920s therefore owes much of its ideological moulding to these movements along with maestro of *Hindutva*, V.D. Savarkar, the then Hindu Mahasabha president. The RSS from its different ideological mentors therefore got variable doses of its evolving cultural nationalistic philosophy. From Swami Dayanand under whom, 'rationalism gave way to faith, equivalence to superiority and tolerance to militancy'¹⁴⁸ the RSS got aggressive face of neo Hindu who not only considered British but also Muslim faith as foreigner. From Swami Vivekanand, the RSS understood the importance of physical strength for the Hindus *i.e.* the

147. H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p. 14.

148. K.W.Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century Punjab*, Manohar, Delhi, 1976, p. 30.

concept of masculinity along with his *Advaita Vedanta*. From Aurobindo, who stood for pride in the past, pain in the present and passion for the future,¹⁴⁹ the RSS got revivalist moorings with their equation of *Sanatan Dharma* with the Hindu nation. From Bankim, whose '*Vande Matram*' profoundly affected the RSS's thought process and the organization even demanded to replace '*Jana Gana Mana*' by this song as Indian national anthem, the RSS conjured up the image of motherland as mother goddess '*Shakti*'. Bankim's depiction of Muslims as irrational, devious, immoral, bigoted and sensual and subjection of Bengal to alien rule over long centuries¹⁵⁰ prompted the RSS, particularly, its first two *sarsanghchalaks* who had variable stints in Bengal and had witnessed Bankim's revolutionary ideas put into practice, appropriated it for constructing RSS's anti-Islamic thesis. Similarly, Tilak's celebration of *Ganapati* and *Shivaji utsava* and his Arctic Origin of the Aryan thesis effectively influenced the RSS who received it through Moonje, one of Tilak's ardent followers. Further, the Maharashtrian origin of the RSS owed very much to Tilak's Hindu mobilization in Maharashtra, which provided them (Hindus) with a sense of psychological superiority and a feeling that they belong to one religion.¹⁵¹

149. Sri Aurobindo, *India's Rebirth: Out of the Ruins of the West*, Institute De Recherché Evolutives, Paris, 1994, p. 178.

150. Tapan Ray Chaudhary, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, pp.127, 128.

151. On Tilak's Hindu nationalist moorings and his adoption of aggressive reactions *vis-à-vis* Muslims in Maharashtra see D.P.Karmarkar, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak: A Study*, Popular, Bombay, 1956. Similarly another Bengali nationalist B.C.Pal attributed India's decline to Hindus' separation and the incongruence between spiritual enlightenment and social welfare. However, lacking unanimity and agreement these theories of nationhood often competed and contradicted each other see; C. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1964, pp. 323-326 and 134 ff.

The RSS is often designated as a Hindu organization which is true. But one peculiar thing that has to be kept in mind is that, the RSS never attaches much importance to religious and textual aspects of the Hinduism. They never ask anybody who comes to join the RSS whether he believes in Vaishnavism or Shaktism or Shaivism. Neither they have induced any of their *swayamsevaks* to visit temples or offer prayers to deities. In their offices at all levels, there are the pictures of Hindu national heroes hanged and above all of Bharat Mata, but none other gods or goddesses of the Hindu pantheon finds place there.¹⁵² One can therefore safely say that RSS espouse worship and dedication towards national symbols and nationalism, though Hindu in essence. It insists on its people to have loyalty and love for motherland and her heritage. The corporate Hindu nation is venerated by the RSS as living god and invoked as mother.

However, many critics describe the RSS belief system as conservative, fundamentalist, fascist and orthodox.¹⁵³ It is true that the RSS being a centralized organization tread on a focused aim and therefore leave little room for the dissent. But by delving deep into the organizational and ideological structure of the RSS and talking to its people, one can assume that there is a definite egalitarian under-current in its thought process. In the earlier stages of its evolution the situation of India was different and much volatile then it is today. So in

152. Though the picture of Rama is there but here they consider him as a warrior hero and not as a Hindu god. Moreover, Rama's picture got more prominence only after the conflagration of Ayodhya issue.

153. There is a plethora of critical studies on the RSS since the organization came into existence. But the frequency of studies and intensity of criticism increased manifold after increasing political clout of the BJP in late 1980s and more after *Ram Janmabhoomi* agitation during which *Sangh Parivar* successfully mobilized millions of Hindus across India, showing the religious strength of political *Hindutva*.

those types of circumstances the ideology adopted by the RSS was meant to cater needs of the Hindu society. They believed (in those times) that Hindus due to their continuous domination by the foreigners, first by the way of Muslim invaders and then by the British were mentally, intellectually and morally wrecked and thus their vitality as a nation and as a human had been reduced abysmally to the lowest ebb. So in order to invigourate the dying nation their national (Hindu) spirit has to be awakened.

The conditions have changed for the better since the inception of RSS to the present times. Therefore their ideology has also undergone a paradigm shift though still they remain hooked to basic tenents but the so called ideological stagnation has been stirred. The bitterness in Hindu-Muslim relations has been eased to a great extent and the RSS is quick to acknowledge this fact, which is quite discernible from its various stances (e.g. Muslims are included in the BJP (*e.g.* since 1977, the RSS has opened its membership for the non-Hindus and Muslims are now members of its political front, the BJP).

The belief system of the RSS is no doubt still represents hard core Hinduism but one has to see whether this ideology of the RSS is creating nuisance and fear for others *i.e.* the Hindus who do not adhere to its ideas and the non-Hindus. It is seen that the RSS has started to out grow from its traditional caste hegemonic base *i.e.* Brahmin and commercial castes and middle class. The caste hatred had never been in practice in the RSS though they accept caste hierarchy but shun inequality and untouchability which is so much dear in traditional Brahmical

Hinduism.¹⁵⁴ As late as in 1939, Ambedkar visited *Sangh Siksha Varga* (Camp) in Pune and was surprised to learn that in the camp nobody cared for each others caste, and the *swayamsevaks*, he found, were moving in absolute equality and brotherhood.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, in 1934 when Gandhi visited the RSS camp at Wardha; he was very much astonished to know that in the camp nobody knew each others caste and what to talk of untouchables.¹⁵⁶ So their only motive now seems to unite the Hindus and empower them with the sense of pride and dignity though the means still remain questionable.

Another important aspect of the RSS ideology is its assimilative content, which means unlike Nazis who believed in ethnic cleansing of the Jews or purging them out of Germany, they viewed that whosoever lives in India should treat it as their nation irrespective of their communal affiliations and should assimilate itself in the mother society (Hindu society). The objective of the RSS is, therefore, to make India an organic community.¹⁵⁷ Golwalkar's ideology proceeds essentially by taking society rather than race as the matrix of Hindu nation. The RSS ideology can be called as totalitarian in a sense that they concentrate much on the relationship

154. For example, Savarkar was averse to untouchability and he expressed his wish that after his death his dead body should be carried by a *Mahar*, a *Maratha*, a *Brahmin* and a *Mang*, See Govindacharya's extract in Blitz, New Delhi, December 3, 1993, anniversary issue. For his aversion to Brahmanical supremacy see, Dhananjay Keer, op.cit., p. 188. Golwalkar though stood for caste system but didn't favoured discrimination on its basis, see M.S.Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, op.cit., pp. 109,110. Deen Dayal considered that caste system creates harmony in the society as the different parts of human body do to the humans.

155. H.V.Sheshadri, op.cit., p.10.

156. Ibid.

157. M.S.Golwalkar, op.cit., p. 33. For more discussion on this point see chapter 3.

between individual and the nation without aid of any intermediate structures.¹⁵⁸

The organization's secrecy has been a major feature of the RSS ideology according to its critics. They point out that to keep the aims and objectives of an organization concealed often leads to confusion and frustration among the people, who are supposed to know much more than the present set of information. The RSS remained active during Independence and Partition, Chinese war, Pakistan wars, Emergency, Ayodhya campaign and also during various other natural calamities, but the people do not understand that what it is doing during its hibernation times? The organizational functions and decision making processes of the RSS too are not well known. I view that critics are quite fair when they talk about and criticise the secretive nature of the RSS's functioning. But the point of argument remains that the RSS shuns publicity of its working. Most of the organizational affiliates of the RSS are engaged in one or the other kind of social, cultural, political and philanthropic activities be it in slums, in educational field or among the tribals. The people among whom they are working know them well. Moreover, the RSS itself is quite open to scrutiny as far as my interaction with them is concerned. Also with the changing times and the availability of the modern means of information at disposal one can get information right from the organizations' beginning to the present times on its each and every aspect. However, the internal secrecy is maintained but then it is part of every organization; political, economic or cultural. The thing is that whether the RSS ever denied anybody's access to know them? As far

158. C. Jafferlot (e.d.), *The Sangh Parivar*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 81.

as my study and research experience is concerned, the answer is negative. Moreover, after the ban on the RSS after Gandhiji's murder in 1948 it was asked to draw its constitution and which is a no secret.

The leaders and ideologues of the RSS in economic sphere of nation are the strong supporters and promoters of *swadeshi*. Though this ideology of *swadeshi* didn't appear when Mahatma Gandhi launched it against the British and came to fore only in 1980s.¹⁵⁹ They believe that this ideology is congruent with the national ideology. According to them, the idea of *swadeshi* is not absolute or retrograde, it is the idea of developing ones own resources, it is not opposed to high technology.¹⁶⁰ As already mentioned for the promotion of this doctrine, the RSS has its autonomous wing called Swadeshi Jagrana Manch.

So the ideology of RSS runs into the entire spectrum of cultural, political and economic life and encompasses all the domains of national life of the Hindus with primary focus on civil society. According to the RSS, society and nation are dearer than the state, though politics is important to influence the national life through the channel of state. But overtly they keep distance from active politics. The perversion of the RSS from politics is perhaps due to the belief of its earlier leaders like Hedgewar and Golwalkar who viewed politics as unethical with the employment of morally questionable means to achieve ends. Moreover, their talk is of moulding the character of a human being rather than the state. They believe that political power will fade away when dharma will become the accepted norm of behaviour.¹⁶¹ Hedgewar and the other RSS ideologues believed that

159. Parvathy Appaiah, op.cit., p. 91.

160. *Organiser*, December 19, 1994.

161. Andersen and S. Damle, , op.cit., p. 83.

the character building, in itself is sufficient to achieve the desired transformation of a community.

Conclusion

The founders of the RSS assumed that the current ailment and weaknesses of Hindu society could only be cured by reviving the Hindu nation. The mental colonialism of Hindus was due to the long period of slavery first under the Muslim rule and then British. So in order to achieve the goal of Hindu resurgence they believed, that there was a need of socio-cultural renaissance. Therefore to achieve this RSS was founded and with the due course of time it attained the stature of a big Banyan tree with its branches spread in every walk of life through its affiliates. The strict discipline and hierarchical organization of the RSS proved very helpful in these long run goals cherished by its leader. These endeavours for the resurgence of Hindus however created a climate of suspicion among its opponents and the members of other communities against whom it sometimes adopt hostile stance. Therefore due to these moorings it has been often branded as communal organization, which draws its inspiration from Fascism and Nazism. But the RSS people from time to time have repudiated these allegations in favour of their socio-cultural working which it has been doing by itself and by the agency of its affiliates.

This organization since its foundation on *Vijayadashmi* of 1925 till today went through several hitches. However, it has not only sustained itself during this span of eighty-three years but also grew and prospered. The organization though started with an apolitical orientation tasted political power at several stages starting with the launch of its political organ *Bhartiya Jana Sangh*. So with its increasing political clout which was supplemented by its surging network in social and economic field provided it with enough strength to influence national life and national policies. In spite of the three bans imposed on

it during its history, the organization managed to resurrect itself each and every time like Phoenix from ashes which is due to the organization's dynamic nature and its mature readjustment of policies and goals with ever-changing India. Metaphorically speaking, the RSS during its history behaved like an Amoeba which changes its shapes according to the circumstances. But still the RSS require shedding some of the ingredients of its belief system and methods to achieve its end. Foremost is the change in its exclusiveness, though it had done so in the past (1977) but still there is a lot of scope. And secondly, it needs to repackage itself as an organization with an expansive foresight and for that it has to shed some of its obscurantist, conservative stereotypes.

The present discussion on the RSS from its origin to its ideology provides us with an effective launching ground for delving into the detailed study of RSS in Punjab. This introductory description of the RSS though not an exhaustive one as already many studies, both apologetic and critical, on this organization have been undertaken, gives us insight into the phenomenon called RSS which is so much talked about. Since my study is on Punjab therefore in the succeeding chapters I shall focus on the development of RSS in this socially, culturally and politically important region of India.

Chapter 2

Punjab: From Early Twentieth Century Till 1984

The objective of this chapter is to comprehend and analyse the history of Punjab, so as to situate the rise and development of the RSS in historical cum socio-political perspective. By comprehending and analysing the history of Punjab during the twentieth century *i.e.* from 1900 to 1980s, it would be clearer for us to understand various phases through which the RSS underwent. Any individual or an organization for that matter cannot operate in isolation, without being involved with the mainstream happenings taking place in various spheres of the society. They are bound to influence and in a result get influenced by the different processes, social and political. As my field of research is a little explored one as far as historians of modern Punjab are concerned, therefore, before delving into the main subject matter, it wouldn't be inappropriate to first venture into the history of modern and contemporary Punjab to locate the context in which the RSS sought to establish itself. For the sake of simplicity we shall divide our study in two parts *i.e.* pre-independence and post-independence Punjab. The study will end in 1984. Between these two parts, there will be several sub themes dealing with the main landmark events which took place during those times in a chronological manner.

The Punjab, as it is in its present state, was much different from that was in the beginning of the twentieth century. Under the British rule, which was established over here in 1849, it was much bigger in geographical area, comprising Pakistan Punjab, Indian Punjab, Haryana and the larger areas of the modern Himachal Pradesh. Delhi too was included in Punjab until 1911 when it was

separated and made the capital of India. On the eve of independence, the partition took place and the worst sufferer of the process was the state of Punjab. It was segregated into two parts *viz.* East Punjab and the West Punjab on the basis of the majority population of those areas. The Muslim dominated West Punjab went to Pakistan, whereas the non-Muslim majority East Punjab was merged in the Indian Union. The PEPSU States, which earlier were a separate entity, in 1956, were merged with the Indian Punjab. On the linguistic basis again the boundaries of Punjab were redemarcated on November 1, 1966, resulting into the separate Hindi-speaking areas forming a new state of Haryana. The hilly areas were merged to form Himachal Pradesh.

Therefore, to study the history of the Hindu right wing in Punjab we have to briefly gloss over the historical sketch of this socially, politically, economically and strategically important region of the country. In the present chapter therefore, I will endeavour to construct the history of Punjab so as to situate the RSS into broader social-historical setting.

Punjab from early twentieth century till 1947:

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Punjab under the British rule was turning out to be the hot bed of socio-political fermentation as was experienced by the other parts of India. The hectic activities during the first decade of the past century were partially the result of the British colonial policies and partially due to the intense reformist and revivalist zeal of the Hindu, Muslim and the Sikh socio-religious reform movements.

The British government in order to curb the growing assertiveness of urban middle class and to divide the populace among urban and rural passed the Land Alienation Act of 1901, legally disqualifying a whole section of a community from purchasing agricultural land. This was less economical and more of a communal

law.¹ The law clearly implied to create a wedge between city and country folks in policy and between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in intent.

A section of Hindu population was particularly affected by this policy. The failure of the Indian National Congress to respond towards this measure turned many Hindus against it. For succour therefore, they looked upon Arya Samajists and later on the Hindu Sabha to protect and strengthen their interests, economic and political. Meanwhile, the government passed two more regressive laws, first an increase in Bari Doab water rates and second, the Canal Colonization Bill which meant that the grantees such as peasants, military men, *etc.* were treated merely as tenants of the crown and not the actual owners.²

The first decade of the past century was also the time when various socio-cultural reform movements were cropping up among the three main religious communities of Punjab *viz.* Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. Among the Hindus, the Arya Samaj was the most important reformist movement started by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 at Bombay. Notwithstanding the place of its origin this movement had generated a great following in North India. In 1877, with the arrival of Swami in Punjab this movement was also established here with the first branch being established at Lahore.³ The prominent personalities of Punjab namely, Lala Hans Raj, Pandit Gurudatt and Lala Lajpat Rai were attracted to this new fold which

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1. Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab*, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1990, p. 165.
 2. Shymala Bhatia, *Social Change and Politics: 1898-1910*, Enkay Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 257, 258.
 3. K.W.Jones, *Arya Dharam*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 35-37.

strengthened the following of this new cult in Punjab.⁴ The class composition of the Arya Samaj included large proportion of the Hindu commercial classes, prominently from the middle strata of the society, who had their monopoly in the western education and new professions. The Arya Samaj was closely related to the politics by the virtue of its association with the political leaders of Indian National Congress which many a times forced it to adopt anti-colonial stance.

The other socio-religious movements among the Hindus, though comparatively of lesser significance and impact *vis-à-vis* the Arya Samaj were the Dev Samaj and the Sanatan Dharam movements, which too like Arya Samaj originated in the last quarter of the 18th century. The founders of both the movements *viz.* Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri and Pandit Shraddha Ram Phillauri were constantly in conflict with the Arya Samajists.⁵ On diverse religious and social issues ranging from basic tenets of Hinduism to the modern day practices the former stood for orthodoxy and traditions while the latter was for the reformist orthodoxy thereby purging Hinduism of its evil practices which hitherto ailed the vitals of the religion. The Sanatanists, therefore, were more radical in their defence of Hinduism and its rituals in which, among other things, the condemnation of Christianity and Islam formed the basis of their ideology and propaganda. The Dev Samajists, however, were more akin to the Aryas, and unlike Sanatanists they were less radical, but then they too supported the idol worship that they address as Dev Bhagwan Atma. Interestingly, both these movements drew its adherents from the highly educated upper caste and middle class Hindus which included

4. Ibid., p. 50.

5. K.W.Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in the British India*, Cambridge University Press, Indian Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 103-109.

Brahmins, land owners, princes, merchants and so on. In other words, most of their followers included the pre-British elite.

The Muslim community of Punjab too was not untouched by the wave of socio-religious reforms. The vulnerability of the Islam *vis-à-vis* other communities prompted their theological leaders to respond aptly towards the changing circumstances. Notwithstanding the claims of the already established *Anjuman-i-Islamia* and *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam*, which were the counterparts of Arya revivalists, the new entrant in this newly treaded field was the Ahmediya sect. The founder, messianic Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, a Qadian born Muslim rich man, claimed publically that he was *masiah mauud* (promised messiah) .⁶ He, during his theological career, was continuously engaged in a tract war with his contemporary counterparts of other religious communities, particularly with the Arya Samajists and in one of his prophecies he even predicted the death of Swami Dayanand which accidently proved true.

The Sikhs, numerically the smallest of the three communities, too began to feel the heat of the new wave of revivalism and reform. Their quest for separate identity and puritanical orthodoxy accompanied by communal consciousness lead to the foundation of Singh Sabhas at Amritsar and Lahore in 1873 and 1879, respectively.⁷ The Singh Sabha reformers were concerned with the defining of parameters of the Sikh identity. In their crusade for the recognition as a distinct community they advocated the clear demarcation of the boundaries from the Hindus. They publically advocated the distinction of the Sikh community.⁸ The Chief Khalsa

6. Ibid., p. 116.

7. Ibid., pp. 109, 110.

8. Rajiv A. Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1986, p. 29.

Diwan of Amritsar formed in 1902⁹ to succeed the Lahore and Amritsar associations, served as the representative body of all the Singh Sabhas. These Sikh organizations ostensibly were created for the upliftment of the Sikhs and Sikh religion through education, publication of literature, etc. But in their diatribes and polemical propaganda in response to Arya Samajists, Christian missionaries and Islamic fundamentalists, they went a long way in establishing and consolidating their separate identity.

The diversity of the religious communities in Punjab and the resultant reformist movements apparently for the betterment of their respective faiths and faithful produced unpleasant communal climate. Their revivalist zeal created conditions similar to that of 'one man's meat is other man's poison'. Each of these movements wanted to see their ideas as absolute unbending truth refuting the similar claim of others. The *Shuddhi* and *Sanghathan*, *Tabligh* and *Tanzim* and the Gurudwara reforms of, Hindus Muslims and the Sikhs respectively which had been devoted to communal propaganda virtually carried the day. The proselytization by the Muslims clashed with the similar activities of the Aryas who were bent on reclaiming their lost brethren. The Sikhs and the Hindus clashed, when the former asserted their distinct identity and separate religion from the parental Hinduism which Aryas were too reluctant to accept. The polemical tract wars among the ideologues of these communities left no stone unturned to malign each others faith, for instance, in the Arya Samaj's holy text *Satyarth Parkash* (in its revised edition) direct attack on the Sikh gurus, scriptures and the Sikhs were carried out. Later on, in other Arya Samajist publications faith and the current Sikh practices were

9. K.W. Jones, op. cit., p. 114.

also condemned.¹⁰ The tracts like '*Sikh Hindu Hain*' (Sikhs are Hindus) by Lala Thakar Das and Bawa Narain Singh pleaded the case of the Arya Samaj. The Sikhs too were not contented with mere social reforms. Two famous tracts in which distinctness of the Sikhism vis-à-vis Hinduism was virulently emphasized were, 'Hum Hindu Nahin' of Kahan Singh Nabha, published in 1898 and later on in 1900 Ditt Singh published a brochure called '*Sadhu Dayanand te Mera Sambad*'. The Muslim press though not much developed due to illiteracy among the Muslim masses, came to life with the Ahmediyas who were equally vehement on religious assertion.

The British Government too was not the silent spectator of the developments and the incidents taking place on inter community platform. True to their spirit and policy of divide et impera they created schisms among Hindus Muslims and the Sikhs. As stated earlier by the way of various legislations they created a chasm between the urban and the ruralites which had its clear and direct implications on inter communal relations. As the Hindus were predominantly urban dwellers with the business interests whereas Sikhs and the Muslims were mostly from the farm community. So in response, therefore, a more mature consciousness developed within the middle classes, though still contained in communal religious identity. It took the form of militancy and nationalism in order to protect their interests. The case of Aryas and the Singhs amply displayed such responsive actions.¹¹

The basic ingredient of the right wing movements among different communities in Punjab was their aggressive nationalistic appeal to the conscious of their respective communities. Each group

10. K.W. Jones, *Arya Dharam*, op. cit., p. 137.

11. Richard G. Fox, op. cit., p. 164.

wanted to wrest maximum benefit of the British policies and to corner others in the best possible way. The communal mood of the different communities resulted in limited success of the Indian National Congress here. Though there was an early enthusiasm among the Punjabi Hindus regarding the Congress session of 1900, but still this session remained one of the poorly attended sessions since 1886.¹² Aryas were particularly disenchanted with the Congress "do-nothing" movement and all talk, no action policy and therefore left the Congress to return to religion, social reform and communal solidarity.¹³ The communal competition therefore dominated the Punjabis as they drifted themselves towards a future of political action and the government suppression. The Muslims and the Sikhs too were reluctant to join Congress as they viewed it as a Hindu body, notwithstanding its secular credentials which it had established since its inception in 1885.

So a distinct political tradition had developed in Punjab in the early twentieth century with the communal issues and the identities dominating the urban scene which by and large were absent in the rural areas where economic, interests and the personal loyalties held sway. Again, the growing schism between the various communities was the part of the pan-Indian nationalist struggle. So it can be said that as the nationalist movement gained strength with each passing year, the communal cauldron too equally heated up. The political and economic issues were enmeshed with the religious ones. The diatribe among the Hindus and the Sikhs was not as serious as between Hindus and the Muslims, with the Sikhs always ended up siding with the Hindus; as the general consensus was that the word

12. Kenneth W. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

Hindu also included Sikhism.

The Hindu-Muslim antagonisms owed much of its allegiance to the religious reasons. The sanctity of the cow, opening of *jhatka* meat shops in the Muslim locality, Hindi- Urdu controversy, playing music before the mosque or throwing stones at the processions of the opposite community were the mobilizing issues among them. Further, the Land Alienation Act of 1901, an economic measure with strong communal undertones drifted apart the communities even in the rural areas. The political and economic issues involving these communities assumed the form of communal antagonisms. For instance, communal representation to the Muslims caused disturbance among the Hindus and the Sikhs who felt that their legitimate rights had been sacrificed for the sake of other community. The antagonisms were also discernible in securing government jobs, preferential treatments, concessions, *etc.*

The unrest between Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs, therefore, propped up the right wing organisations among them. The Arya Samaj, Hindu Sabha, Hindu Maha Sabha, Anjumans and then Muslim League, Singh Sabhas, Chief Khalsa Diwan and later on Akali Dal; among Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs respectively, assumed the role of the vanguard of the interests of their respective communities. Among the Hindus, Arya Samaj and the Hindu Sabha proved to be the forerunners of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Punjab providing it with necessary where withal. In the nationalist struggle for freedom, however, these communities and their leadership forged joint front against the British policies e.g., during the agitation of 1907, *Ghadar*, *Khilafat* and Non Cooperation, adoption of the Lahore Resolution, *etc.* But this unity and cooperation always proved short-lived and saving the Congress all other right wing organizations mostly spoke for the

interest of their own community, frequently seconding national interest to the communal interest.

Punjab: 1907 to 1919

The simmering political discontent among the Punjabis subsided somewhat when the land tax and the water rates were reduced along the amnesty for Punjab leaders deported to Burma.¹⁴ After their return, both, Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh became active once again in different ways. Lala Lajpat Rai established his contacts with Bhai Parmanand, a daring adventurer and a Hindu nationalist, whom later on British charged with sedition during the Ghadar movement in 1915. Meanwhile Ajit Singh too disappeared from India and moved to different countries from Persia to Geneva to Rio de Janeiro, from where he established his contacts with the Ghadharites.¹⁵

The national movement had started showing its effect in Punjab with each passing year. To meet the growing unrest the British government increasingly began to use the loyal Muslim elements against the joint effort of the nationalists. The Muslims got separate electorates with the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, thus off setting Hindu preponderance in numbers. The Sikhs too demanded a similar treatment but no notice was taken of the Khalsa Diwan's representation to the government.¹⁶ Uptill *Ghadar*, all the agitations were curbed in Punjab from 1910-1913, with Michael O Dwyer

14. Kushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, Volume-2*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1966, p. 159.

15. G.S.Chabara, *Advanced History of the Punjab, Volume-2*, Parkash Brothers Educational Publishers, Ludhiana, 1972, p. 474.

16. Kushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 218, 219.

assuming the charge of Punjab, who was hell bent on crushing every kind of revolutionary activity.

An alternative way of achieving the freedom apart from the Congressional politics was revolutionary movement, which now in the form of *Ghadar* was finding expression among the overseas Punjabis. Notwithstanding the communalism of the three communities of Punjab, this was one of the first non-communal movements in India. The participants of this movement were Lala Hardayal, Sohan Singh Bhakana, Kartar Singh Sarabha and many others. *Ghadar* had a great appeal among Punjabis. The chief motive of this movement was to overthrow the British rule by the armed struggle by sneaking into India in the wake of First World War. The *Kamagatamaru* incident of 1914, the clamping of Ingress into India Ordinance by the government on the immigrant Indians and further leakage of the plans worked against the Ghadarites. This movement, therefore, fizzled out by 1915-1916.

The right wing organizations of the main communities of Punjab however remained more or less indifferent from the revolutionary or for that matter nationalist movement, though the individual participation was discernible. But more conspicuously absent was the participation of the Muslim masses that remained aloof from the *Ghadar* movement. Their leadership at that time was looking at the results of the First World War in which Turkey was engaged in the life and death struggle with Italy. They founded Pan-Islamic Party which evoked strong support from the reputed Muslim leaders like Maulana Azad, Maulana Mohamed Ali and his brother Shaukat Ali. These Pan-Islamists were annoyed at the British attitude of neutrality. The party joined the Berlin revolutionaries to overthrow the British. This conspiracy popularly called as 'Silk Letters

Conspiracy' was unearthed by the Punjab Government and was suppressed.¹⁷ The revolutionary movements in Punjab were not as successful in the initial years as in Bengal, though different organizations joined hands for some time but communal prejudices could not be effectively contained. Moreover, the British resourcefulness, repression and vigilance proved too good for the Indian revolutionaries.

So the ferment in Punjab was political but it had strong social and cultural links. The various communities of Punjab found an anchor in the movements started by the revivalist reformers. The Punjabi Hindu found support and solidarity in the Arya Samaj, Sikhs in the Singh Sabha and later on Chief Khalsa Diwan, whereas Muslims in the Anjumans and the Ahmediya movement. These movements institutionalized the communal consciousness among the people of Punjab. The sources of inspiration of all these movements were the real or imaginary, glorious pasts. The social, political and economic tensions therefore, found expression in the form of dissent and antagonisms.

The discontent in Punjab during the first two decades of the 20th century saw ample participation from the Hindu right wing leaders. There was no active Hindu political organization in Punjab, therefore, the Arya Samaj, which apart from being reformist organization had many personalities who in their individual capacity or as the members of the Indian National Congress participated actively in the Punjab ferment. Besides Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh, both belonging to the Arya Samaj, others who supported anti-government movement were notably Rambhaji Dutt, Lala Lal Chand,

17. Satya M. Rai, *The Partition of the Punjab*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p.30.

Amolak Ram, Mahatama Hans Raj, Lala Munshi Ram, Jaswant Rai, etc.¹⁸ Thus the Arya Samaj movement was primarily concerned with the social and religious questions but its influence inevitably spread to political arenas as well. There was little doubt therefore that the Arya Samaj contributed towards strained relations between the Hindus and the Muslims and later on with the Sikhs also, but we must also delve upon the circumstances in which this movement developed and subsequently flourished in Punjab.

The natural corollary of the awakened Hindu consciousness unleashed by the Arya Samaj was the foundation of the Punjab Hindu Sabha. This was the first expression of the Hindu political consciousness among the Punjabi Hindus. The Indian National Congress inability to further the interests of the Punjabi Hindus, whose constituency had already been consolidated by the Aryas therefore, rallied Hindu leaders to form Punjab Hindu Sabha. This organization with avowed objective of protecting Hindu interests was set up on December 16, 1906. Mohan Chand, a member of the Punjab legislative council, rais of Amritsar and Lala Jai Krishan Das, rais of Lahore were appointed as its president and general secretary. Among other notables of the Punjab Hindu Sabha names of Lala Lajpat Rai, Harkishen Lal, Ruchi Ram Sahani and Pandit Rambhaji Dutt Chowdhary were worth mentioning.¹⁹

The Punjab Hindu Sabha therefore, as the logical manifestation of the heightened communitarian consciousness among the Hindus naturally took up the issues ranging from the socio-religious realm to mundane ones having clear implications on the

18. Shymala Bhatia, op. cit., p. 251.

19. K.L.Tuteja, 'The Punjab Hindu Sabha and Communal Politics', [quoted from *The Tribune*, December 19, 1906], in Indu Banga (ed.), *Five Punjabi Centuries*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1997, p. 130.

emerging middle class. The formation of the Muslim League in 1907 was viewed by the Hindu middle classes as a threat to their politico-economic interests which was further exacerbated by the Morley-Minto reforms. The Hindu Sabhaites admonished the Congress for its neglect of Hindu interests and gave a call for the substitution of Hindu Sabhas for the Congress Committees.²⁰

The Punjab Hindu Sabha was not the compact monolithic organization but actually constituted the different strands of the wide Hindu community. It included the people like Narendernath, who represented elite urban landed interests, a cross-section of the Hindu middle class who looked upon the Congress to further their interests but whenever the policies and activities of the Congress didn't conform to their stand, they go on to the extent of boycotting it, Lal Chand represented this section. The third strand was of the communitarian nationalists who opposed all those who collaborated with the Raj. The Hindu Sabhaities of this section included many Arya Samajists and Lala Lajpat Rai was its fine example.²¹

The All India Hindu Mahasabha was the pan-Indian avatar of the Hindu Sabha. It was founded in 1915 under the aegis of the Punjab Hindu Sabha.²² Already under its auspices the yearly sessions of the Punjab Hindu conference were taking place since 1909 and therefore, the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha was only a sequel to the resolution passed by the Punjab Hindu Conference in 1913 at Ambala. Lala Lal Chand, a prominent member of the Punjab Hindu Conference, in a series of letters published as 'Self-Abnegation in Politics' delineated the world of Hindu fear in those times. His ideas

20. Ibid., p. 131.

21. Ibid., pp. 132, 133.

22. Indra Prakash, *Hindu Mahasabha: Its Contribution to Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 11, 12.

and remedies for the Hindu plight were reflected later on in the statements of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. These concerns of the prominent Hindus of the Punjab laid the foundations of Hindu politics as an alternative to the "national" politics of the Congress.²³

Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh Carnage:

The Indians in general and Punjabi in particular had rendered immense services to the British empire during the First World War but belying all their expectations of reward they were reprimanded with the clamping of Rowlatt Act which was to succeed Defence of India Act after March 1919. The drastic changes proposed in the Act were summed up as '*Na dalil, Na wakil, Na apil*' (no argument, no lawyer and no appeal).²⁴ The resentment generated thus could be gauged from the fact that Gandhi started *Satyagraha* against it and March 30 was chosen as the day to observe hartal which later on was postponed to April, 6. The peaceful protestors in Punjab were provoked with the arrest of Dr. Satya Paul and Dr. Kitchlew. Adding fuel to the fire government arrested Gandhiji on his way to Punjab at Palwal (in modern Haryana) on April 8, 1919.²⁵

The Jallian Wala Bagh Carnage:²⁶

The Rowlatt Act and the Martial Law in Punjab were believed to be the reasons for the disturbed Punjab situation. The worst manifestation of the disturbance and the British barbarity in

23. K.W.Jones, op. cit., pp. 286, 287.

24. Kushwant Singh, op. cit., p.162.

25. Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre* Panjab University Publication Bureau, Chandigarh, 1969, p. 95.

26. This peice of information is generated from V.N.Datta and S.Settar, (ed.), *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, Monograph Series 4, ICHR, Pragati Publications, Delhi, 2000 and Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, Panjab University Publication Bureau, Chandigarh, 1969.

containing it paved the way for Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar. On this fateful day of April 13, 1919, people from far and wide areas of Punjab congregated at the *Bagh* for a peaceful meeting. Some had come to Amritsar for attending the Baisakhi fair and Ram Navami celebrations and so in the afternoon they retired to the *Bagh*. The British on the other hand viewed Punjab situation as highly volatile, so brigadier general Dyer was assigned with the task of maintaining law and order. Taking quick notice of the assembly, he immediately marched towards the Bagh along with his fully armoured troops. Without giving any warning, he ordered firing in which about 1650 rounds were fired to disperse the crowd. According to government figures 372 people were killed and over 1000 were injured. But actual figures were much more than those stated by the government and lieutenant governor of Punjab Michael O'Dwyer fully endorsed his action. Martial Law was proclaimed in Amritsar and subsequently extended to Lahore, Gujranwala, Lyallpur and Gujrat. The massacre and the Martial Law deeply affected the psyche of Punjabis, racial tension was recreated and even the faithfuls of the Raj were now increasingly alienated with their policies.

During these years of the agitational politics the Punjab Hindu Sabha ²⁷ remained largely unaffected by the nationalist fervour

27. The Punjab Hindu Sabha was the political manifestation of the Hindu consciousness among the Punjabi Hindus. So this emerging communitarian consciousness took an organisational form on December 16, 1906, when its (Hindu Sabha) foundation was laid. Thakur Mohan Chand, a member of the Punjab legislative council and *rais* (rich man) of Amritsar and *Rai Bahadur* Lala Jai Krishan Dass, *rais* of Lahore were appointed as its president and general secretary respectively. The other worth mentioning members of the Sabha were Lala Lajpat Rai, Harkishen Lal, Ruchi Ram Sahani and Ram Bhajj Dutt Chowdhary. The Hindu Sabha was the logical corollary of communal solidarity among the emerging Punjabi middle class Hindus who viewed the establishment of the Muslim League in 1907 as a threat to

and didn't participate in the Rowlatt Act *satyagraha* and the ensuing Non-Cooperation movement.²⁸ In the wake of the mounting Hindu-Muslim tensions the Punjab Hindu Sabha articulated its ideology of protecting Hindu interests fully. In the newly formed government under the Montague - Chelmsford reforms in Punjab, it accused the government of favouring Muslims *vis-à-vis* Hindus targeting Fazl-i-Hussain who took the leading part in the government formation in Punjab. It again contributed to the polarisation of the communal relations.²⁹ In order to defend the rights and the claims of the Hindu interests in Punjab, the Punjab Hindu Sabha changed its name to Punjab Hindu Suraksha Sabha. But it didn't achieve desirable success and therefore, eclipsed from the political scene in 1923. Most of its members joined the provincial units of the Hindu Mahasabha. Bhai Parmanand, by this time, emerged as an important ideologue of the

their economic interests. The Morley-Minto reforms further increased their feeling of vulnerability. The Hindu Sabhites were critical of the Congress neglect of Hindu interests. However the Punjab Hindu Sabha included in it different strands which even included the people like *Raja* Narendra Nath who represented elite urban land interests, a middle class who otherwise were the supporters of the Congress included people like Lal Chand and third was communitarian nationalists like Lala Lajpat Rai. During this time Lal Chand's *Self Abnegation in Politics* delineated the world of Hindu fear. So the foundations for 'Hindu Politics' inspite of 'National Politics' were laid. The Punjab Hindu Sabha was also instrumental in the foundation of Hindu Mahasabha in 1915 at Haridwar. In the furtherance of its objectives, the Punjab Hindu Sabha changed its name to Punjab Hindu Suraksha Sabha. But this body eclipsed in 1923 and its members joined provincial units of the Hindu Mahasabha.

For details see, K.L.Tuteja, op. cit., For other aspects on the point refer to K.L.Tuteja and O.P.Grewal, 'Emergence of Hindu Communal ideology in the Early twentieth Century Punjab', in Indu Banga and Jaidev (ed.), *Cultural Reorientation in Modern India*, IAS, Shimla, 1996.

28. K.L. Tuteja, op. cit., pp. 133, 134.

29. David Page, *Prelude to Partition*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, p. 86.

Hindu nation in Punjab.

Punjab 1919 to 1935:

The Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 further continued the *divide et impera* policy of the British as the system of separate electorates was now extended to the Sikhs also. In the legislative council 15 seats were reserved for them out of 93 seats and similarly in the central legislative assembly they were given 3 seats out of the total of 145 and in the council of states 1 member was to be a Sikh out of a total of 60 members.³⁰ The Congress party till out of sync with the Punjabis now was all out to thwart the British designs and to provide a healing touch to them. The annual session of the Congress was held at Amritsar in December 1919 where Jallianwala Bagh massacre was condemned and the dismissal of brigadier general Dyer was sought. Punjab gave Gandhi the slogan: Complete Independence and the plan of action: *Satyagraha*.³¹

The Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation movements were the manifestations of the growing nationalistic resistance to the British authorities. Under the direction of Gandhi, the agitation over *Khilafat* question was coupled with Indian resentment over the government action in Punjab.³² The Hindu, Muslim and Sikh politicians, each group motivated by their own particular aspirations and grudges, joined forces in a campaign against the government. So for the time being different communities came together. In Punjab, Dr. Kitchlew, Zafar Ali Khan, Lal Khan, Agha Mohammed Safdar and Sayeed Habib Shah were the spearheads of the Khilafat.³³ On the

30. Kushwant Singh, op. cit., pp. 219-223.

31. Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, World Book Centre, New Delhi, p. 649.

32. Rajiv A. Kapur, op .cit., p. 90.

33. Harish Jain, (ed.), *The Making of Punjab*, Unistar, Chandigarh, 2003, p. 227.

Hindu nationalist side Lala Lajpat Rai, Lala Kanhiya Lal, Bhim Sen Sachar were among the forty one lawyers who wound up their practice.³⁴ The Sikhs too had cast their lot with the Hindu and the Muslim politicians, in an addition to voicing their own demands promised moral support for the *Khilafat* agitation.³⁵ However, the staunch Hindu nationalists remained averse to the *Khilafat* agitation and concentrated more on strengthening the *Sangthan* movement. The Hindu leaders like Swami Shradhanand and Ram Bhaj Dutt parted completely from the Congress so as to devote themselves completely to the Hindu consolidation.³⁶ However, both *Khilafat* and the Non - Cooperation proved short lived and the latter was called off by Gandhi due to the Chauri Chaura incident of February 5, 1922.

The period from 1920 to 1925 in Punjab is also known for the non-violent Sikh struggle for the reform in gurdwaras. Since 1902, the Chief Khalsa Diwan had been asking for the reforms in gurudwara management. The Central Sikh League, a nationalist Sikh body, was formed in 1919 with the twin objectives, *i.e.* attainment of *Swaraj* and the promotion of *Panthic* interests.³⁷ So in the course of the movement six important morchas were led to rid gurdwaras of the Hindu practices and the Hindu *mahants*. Even in one of the *morchas* at Khadaur Sahib, there were bitter allegations of the destruction by the Akalis of Hindu idols within the gurdwara precincts and equally vehement Akali denials.³⁸ The gurdwara reform movement strained

34. Ibid.

35. *Fortnightly Report*, Second Fortnight of May 1920, (31 May 1920) GOI, Home (Political) No.95.

36. Prem Raman Uperty, *Religion and Politics in Punjab in the 1920s*, Sterling, Jullundur, 1980, pp. 83, 84.

37. Virender Grover, (ed.), *The Story of Punjab: Yesterday and Today*, Volume-I, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, p. 426.

38. Rajiv Kapur, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

the relations between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. Though the Sikhs claimed that the gurudwara reform movement was not communal, but it was certainly a separatist movement from the point of view of religion.³⁹ Even Pandit Nehru acknowledged:

“Their movement is largely a separatist movement as far as religion is concerned and this has naturally reacted in social and political sphere.”⁴⁰

However, the general nationalist attitude towards the movement from Hindu and Muslim quarters was sympathetic. On July 8, 1925 the Sikh struggle for the Gurdwaras ended with the passage of Sikh Gurdwaras Bill.⁴¹

The Simon commission was appointed on November 8, 1927, to review the working of Montford Reforms of 1919 and to recommend further constitutional reforms. But this ‘all White Commission’ was boycotted by all the nationalists. But in Punjab due to acute communal distrust the boycott could not be much effective.⁴² Meanwhile, Lala Lajpat Rai was brutally assaulted while leading the agitation at Jalandhar in October 1928 and latter on succumbed to his injuries on November 17, 1928. But on the other side, the Muslim League under Muhammad Shafi decided that the Muslims in Punjab should not boycott the Simon Commission.⁴³ The Punjab Hindu Mahasabha under *Raja* Narendra Nath too decided to cooperate with

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39. K.L.Tuteja, *Sikh Politics*, Vishal Publications, Kurukshetra, 1984, p.III.
40. ‘J.L.Nehru to K.M.Pannikar’ on April 2, 1924, in S.Gopal, ed., *Selected Works of Jawahar Lal Nehru*, Volume 2, p. 151.
41. Rajiv Kapur, op. cit., p. 190.
42. K.L.Tuteja, op. cit., p. 139.
43. Azim Husain, *Fazal-i-Husain: A Political Biography*, Bombay, 1946, p. 246.

the Commission.⁴⁴ The Sikhs too decided to join other communalists in cooperating with the Commission as they didn't have any faith in the Congress boycott.⁴⁵ An all-party meeting of the three principal communities yielded 'Nehru Report', named after Moti Lal Nehru, the chairman of the joint conference. The Nehru Report keeping in view the interests of the Hindu and Sikh minorities in Punjab rejected the reservation of seats for the majority community *i.e.* Muslims in Punjab.⁴⁶

The Nehru Report though was an impressive exercise but the Muslims gave scant respect to it and the Sikhs too rejected it. The Central Sikh League's general secretary, Master Tara Singh declared that the Nehru Report is unacceptable to the Sikhs.⁴⁷ In the Congress session at Lahore on December 31, 1929, '*Puran Swaraj*' resolution was passed and January 26, 1930 was decided as 'Independence Day' to be celebrated through out India. But the Congress here did not want to alienate the Sikhs and to make the session totally a Hindu affair because the Muslim League had already severed its ties with the Congress. So the communalism of the Akalis won and the Congress modified its stand and assured the Sikhs that no constitutional proposal would be acceptable to the Congress which did not give full satisfaction to the Sikh demands.⁴⁸

The Civil Disobedience Movement:

The Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi started the Civil Disobedience movement on March 12, 1930.

44. The Tribune, June 6, 1928

45. Ibid., January 27, 1928.

46. K.L.Tuteja, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

47. The Tribune, October 26, 1928.

48. Kailash Chander Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 50.

From Punjab about 7000 *satyagrahis* were convicted during the first phase.⁴⁹ Initially, the Sikh leadership of Punjab was reluctant to participate in the movement as their colour (saffron) was not included in the flag.⁵⁰ However, Master Tara Singh did not want to boycott the movement. Dr. Kitchlew and Master Tara Singh were the leaders of the *satyagrahis* in Punjab. The Central Sikh League and the Shiromani Akali Dal who were participating in the national movement under the Congress leadership boycotted the elections and also refused to participate in the First Round Table Conference in November 1930. The British wanted the Congress to participate in the talks so they negotiated with Gandhi, which resulted in the signing of Gandhi-Irwin Pact, according to which the British agreed to release all the prisoners from jail and the Congress agreeing to participate in the Second Round Table Conference. The Civil Disobedience movement, therefore, was called off. But the three Round Table Conferences proved ineffective in answering the nationalist questions with communal undertones. In order to solve the communal tangle of Punjab a scheme was prepared by Sir Greogery Corbett, the chief secretary of Punjab. But this scheme was strongly rejected by the Hindu and the Sikh representatives, as it would establish permanent Muslim rule in Punjab.⁵¹

The British government continuing with its '*divide et impera*' policy announced 'Communal Award' on August 17, 1932. The Award was related to the provincial legislatures and accorded

49. K.L.Tuteja, op. cit., p. 150.

50. *The Tribune*, April 15, 1930.

51. Views of the Sikh delegates on Corbett Scheme in 'Templewood Papers', NMML; 'Note on the Redistribution of Punjab' by Raja Narendra Nath, Indian Round Table Conference, Second Session, *Minorities Proceedings*, p. 1435, cited in K.L.Tuteja op.cit., p. 154, 155.

separate electorates for the Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans. The depressed classes were recognized as a minority community entitled to separate electorate.⁵² This Award was bitterly criticised by the Punjab Hindus and the Sikhs, and Pandit Nanak Chand, the Hindu leader characterized the Communal Award as one sided.⁵³ According to him, it granted to Muslims special weight age in every province where they were in minority but ignored the claims of the Hindus of Punjab and Bengal. The Hindus did not even get their quota on the basis of the population, which as a minority community they were entitled to. The Hindus as a minority felt that the absolute majority of a community based upon the separate electorates, unchangeable, unalterable was opposed to all canons of fair play.⁵⁴ Against the Communal Award, the All India Anti Communal Award League was formed by the Hindus and in Punjab, the Sikhs also threw their lot with the Punjabi Hindus.⁵⁵ At this juncture both Hindus and the Sikhs joined themselves against the Muslim majoritarianism and in fact the Hindus were equally anxious to secure the support of the Sikhs against the Award.⁵⁶

Punjab from 1935 to 1947:

The Government of India Act which provided for the federation of Indian provinces and Princely states with two houses of the Parliament in the centre was passed on August 2, 1935. The Congress, the Muslim League and the Akalis rejected the Act as it did

52. A.C.Kapur, *The Punjab Crisis: An Analytical Study*, S.Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1985, pp. 49, 50.

53. Ibid.

54. 'Statement of Reasons' submitted by Pt. Nanak Chand, Indian Round Table Conference, Third Session, *Memorandum*, pp. 166-169, NMML, New Delhi.

55. 'Moonje Papers', NMML, New Delhi.

56. Ibid.

not go far enough to satisfy the political aspirations of the people.⁵⁷ The Hindu right too, expresses its dissatisfaction with the Government of India Bill. The resolution of the All India Hindu Mahasabha (session held at Kanpur on April 20th to 22nd, 1935) moved by R.K.Mookerjee termed it as reactionary and obstructive to the growth of nationalism and democracy on account of its communal scheme intended to keep the communities constantly, estranged from each other.⁵⁸ In the ensuing elections after the Act in 1936-37, the Unionist in Punjab secured majority but still tried unsuccessfully to woo the Hindus, Sikhs and other independents. The Sikander-Jinnah Pact which strengthened, the League's control over the government caused anxiety to both, the Congress and the Akalis and therefore, to combat the growing influence of the Muslim League on the Unionist government, Akali Dal asked its MLAs to join Congress in the Punjab legislature.⁵⁹

However, the new ministry of the Unionists, among others, also included the Hindu nationalist parties like, Raja Narendranath Dutt's National Progressive Party. Manohar Lal was the Minister of Finance in the Unionist government from this party.⁶⁰ Though he was also the member of the Hindu Mahasabha but was moderate in his views and believed in the constitutional means. Raja Narendranath was also the close friend of Sikander Hayat Khan and therefore, most of the Hindu nationalist leaders and their supporters in the urban areas owed their allegiance to the Unionists for the time

57. Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India: 1936-1947*, Oxford University South Asian Study Series, New Delhi, 1987, p. 2.

58. 'All India Hindu Mahasabha, Cawnpore - 20th to 22nd April 1935', in O.P.Ralhan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Political Parties Series, Hindu Mahasabha, Volume-1*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 297.

59. Indu Banga op. cit., p. 239.

60. K.L.Tuteja, op. cit., p. 180.

being.⁶¹ However, G.C.Narang was doubtful regarding the implications of the Sikander- Jinnah Pact but the idea to rally Hindu support for the purpose fizzled out due to the unsupportive attitude of Raja Narendranath.⁶² But as the Muslim League's clout started increasing over the Unionist, the Punjab Hindu Mahasabhaites began raising hue and cry over the communal attitude of the Unionists. Also, the beleaguered Akalis in order to strengthen their position allied themselves with the Hindu Mahasabha which ultimately passed a resolution against the Unionists for showing favouritism towards the Muslims.⁶³ When the President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, Veer Savarkar, came to Punjab the Akalis welcomed him in show of solidarity. He exhorted them not to retreat on Shahidganj issue and assured the help of Hindus to them against the Muslim agitation.⁶⁴

So the outlook at the end of 1939 seemed gloomy. The Congress insisted on the setting up of a constituent assembly at end of the war for determining the Constitution of a free country. However, the orthodox non-Congress Hindus consisting of Lala Rai Bahadur Ramsaran Dass, Raja Narendra Nath and Bhai Parmanand expressed strongest objection to the constituent assembly.⁶⁵ With the outbreak of the Second World War every community in Punjab decided to extract maximum benefit from the British Government. The Akalis decided to support the government war efforts with recruiting more

61. Lionel Carter, *Punjab Politics, 1936-1939: The Start of Provincial Autonomy Governor's Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2004 p. 149.

62. 'Emerson to Linlithgo, Secret D-O.No.16-F.L.Government House, Lahore (November 12th 1937) in *ibid*.

63. For details on the Resolutions of the Hindu Mahasabha see, O.P.Ralhan, (ed.), *op.cit.* pp. 535-549.

64. 'File No.18/5/38,' Home (Political), National Archives of India.

65. 'Craik to Linlithgo, Private and Personal, D.O.No.201-f.L.,Government House, Lahore, December 15, 1939, in Lionel Carter, *op.cit.*, p.408.

Sikhs in the army which would eventually help them in strengthening their community. On the other hand the Congress declared its moral support to the British. The Muslim policy towards the war was also influenced by the Akali policy of more recruitment. Therefore, Sikander Hayat Khan started making efforts to increase recruitment from Punjab.⁶⁶ The Hindu nationalist attitude towards the war was influenced by the call of Sikander Hayat Khan to give ten lakh soldiers from Punjab. According to Moonje, the prominent *Hindutva* ideologue, that in case of British defeat the neighbouring Muslim nations across the N-W Frontier might invade India and Hindus would then be in precarious position, as their fate would lie in the hands of the Muslims. So the only remedy for the Hindus, he proposed, was to form their own militia.⁶⁷ The Hindu nationalists at this juncture didn't want that Muslims should take advantage of any conflict between the Congress and the government. The Punjab Hindus in the beginning of the war, therefore, were for unconditional support to the government thus modifying their loyalties towards the Congress.⁶⁸

The Muslim League's Resolution for the separate Muslim state in March 1940 increased the vulnerability of the Hindus and the Sikhs in Punjab. In order to achieve that end (Muslim League), the Khaksar activity under Inayatullah gained momentum. The Hindu nationalist leader, Narendranath, while describing the motive of the Khaksars to DIG CID of Punjab, Craik mentioned its faith in the cult of violence and its object of securing Muslim domination over the whole of India.⁶⁹ The individual *satyagraha* launched by the Congress in

66. O.P.Ralhan, op. cit., p. 543

67. Ibid.

68. 'Note by Bennett', DIG, CID, Punjab, in Lionel Carter op. cit., p. 393.

69. 'Craik to Linlithgo', Secret and Personal D.O.No.233, Government House Lahore, April 8, 1940, in Lionel Carter, op.cit., p. 119.

protest against the League's moves in 1940 lasted till December 1941, with the Arya Samajist Congress leader like G.C.Bhargava and Bhim Sen Sachar alongwith the Akalis, Kapur Singh and Dharshan Singh Pheruman taking active participation.⁷⁰ The private militias of all the three communities namely, National Guards (Muslim League), Khaksars (Muslims), Akali Sena (Sikhs), R.S.S. and Mahabir Dals (Hindus) assumed greater role in day to day life of Punjab and were also further planning to increase their number.⁷¹ The Cripps Mission of 1942 too failed to bring any accord in the Punjab situation. The Congress rejected it on the issue of control of Defence department and the Muslim League rejected it because the demand for Pakistan was not conceded. For the Sikhs, who felt that they had either to be the non entities in India or totally wiped out unless submitting willingly to a permanent communal subjugation in Pakistan?⁷²

The death of Sikander Hayat Khan in December 1942 removed the last obstacle from the way of Jinnah who now assumed unquestionable leadership of the Muslims. The pressure was put on Khizar Hayat Khan to abandon the title of Unionist and to describe his government as the 'Muslim League Coalition'.⁷³ Thus, in this severe communal crisis both the Hindus and the Sikhs struggled for their survival as minority communities. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Akalis therefore maintained cordial relations with each other in order to oppose the Pakistan scheme.⁷⁴ In the Punjab Provincial Hindu Conference, opened at Lyallpur on April 30, 1943, Narendranath, while speechifying vigorously opposed Pakistan and urged the

70. Harish Jain, ed., op. cit., p. 233.

71. Anita Inder Singh, op. cit., p. 78.

72. Gopal Singh, op. cit., p. 686.

73. Kushwant Singh, op. cit., pp. 251-252.

74. K.L.Tuteja, op. cit., p. 196.

organisation of the Hindu Sabhas in every town and village in Punjab.⁷⁵ Mookerjee in the same conference said, "We have made it clear beyond dispute that a division of India is no solution of India's communal problem. Financially, it is unworkable. Economically, it is disastrous. Politically, it is ruinous for India as a whole".⁷⁶ He also pleaded for complete understanding between the Hindus and the Sikhs because both Hindus and the Sikhs were the oppressed at the hands of a common oppressor and in peace and adversity both remained tied to each other.⁷⁷ He also pleaded for a dispassionate and impartial survey of the conflicting schemes by chosen representatives of each community so that they may understand each others point of view and stand united for their common good.⁷⁸ The Hindu nationalists also demanded immediate release of Gandhi, and Moonje while moving a resolution said that Hindus should be ready to face the threats of Jinnah. Sant Singh, M.L.A. seconded this resolution.⁷⁹

The Hindu nationalists of Punjab were critical of the Congress policy of appeasement towards Jinnah and the Muslim League. Gokul Chand Narang viewed this policy of the Congress responsible for the demand for Pakistan.⁸⁰ But the general feeling among them was that, this demand would never materialise and they believed that it was merely used by Jinnah to extract fifty percent reservation for the Muslims in the central government.⁸¹ The Hindu nationalists also disapproved the scheme of 'Azad Punjab' and

75. 'Punjab Provincial Hindu Conference, Annual Session -Lyallpur 30th April 1943', cited in O.P.Ralhan ed., op. cit., p. 804.

76. Ibid., p. 805.

77. Ibid., pp. 807, 808

78. Ibid., p. 808

79. Ibid., pp. 809, 810

80. Ibid., p. 811.

81. Ibid.

criticised the Unionist government for enacting "discriminatory measures calculated to seriously effect their economic and cultural interests in various ways".⁸² Mookerjee referring to the Pakistan Resolution said that the cry of Pakistan was raised from the Punjab and therefore the graveyard of Pakistan must be found in Punjab.⁸³ In the aftermath of the failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks in September 1944, the communal tension mounted to ugly heights with the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh extremists pitched their battle on the possibilities of a civil war.⁸⁴ However, they were pleased with the break down of Gandhi-Jinnah talks.⁸⁵ The Second World War ended on May 7, 1945 and all the Congress leaders were released. On June 15, 1945 Wavell announced that he would invite Indian leaders to discuss the formation of a new executive council, which would be more representative of the organized public opinion.⁸⁶ The resulting Simla Conference took place on July 14, 1945 but the masterly evasion and intransigence of Jinnah prevented a satisfactory rapprochement between the parties.⁸⁷

The elections of 1945-46 brought about victory, for the Congress, though Muslim League emerged as the largest party. On March 7, Congress, Akalis and the Unionists formed the Punjab Coalition Party, under the leadership of Khizar.⁸⁸ Deprived of constitutional power, the League organized demonstrations against the Ministry. The Muslim students were directed to demonstrate before Khizar's residence by the League, but contrarily the Congress leaders

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid., p. 812.

84. Anup Chand Kapur, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

85. Anita Inder Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 111, 112.

86. Ibid., p. 118.

87. G.D.Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events leading up to and Following the Partition of India*, New Delhi (2nd edition), 1989, p. 29.

88. Anita Inder Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

advised the Hindu students not to indulge in counter demonstrations.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, from March to July 1946, the Cabinet Mission visited India to discuss and work out the process of Indian independence. However in Punjab, there were forebodings of the civil war, where the Sikhs especially, feared Muslim domination in any form of Pakistan.⁹⁰ The interim government under Nehru took charge on September 2, which included six Congress representatives, five Muslim League's, one Sikh, one Parsi and one Christian.⁹¹ However, the Hindu Mahasabha, the main opponents of the Congress in its mouth piece, the Hindu Outlook, said, "Our leaders have succumbed to ordinary temptations and it was easy for the Viceroy to play with these men (...). The speech by Sardar Patel in which he said that they entered the Interim government to help the British to pack up and quit will only excite the smile of the British".⁹² The League on the other hand called for the observance of a 'Black Day' to protest against the Hindu Congress Government.⁹³ The attraction of the idea of Pakistan added an element of necessity by the mounting violence in Punjab. The Muslim League called for 'Direct Action' on June 29, 1946 in pursuance of its agenda and under the mounting pressure ultimately, Khizar Hayat Khan resigned on March 2, 1947,⁹⁴

In the aftermath of the Direct Action the communal strife in Punjab grew out of proportion with the riots breaking in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi, Jalandhar and Sialkot. In the aftermath

89. Statesman, Delhi, March 10, 1946.

90. 'Jenkins to Wavell', April 15, 1946, TOP, Volume-7, p. 272.

91. Anita Inder Singh, op. cit., p. 171. Also see Raghuvendra Tanwar, Reporting the Partition of Punjab 1947: Press Public and Other Opinions, Manohar, New Delhi, 2006, p. 67.

92. Hindu Outlook, Delhi, December 10, 1946.

93. Dawn, Lahore, September 3, 1946.

94. J.S.Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 178.

of the Calcutta, Noakhali and Bihar riots the Hindus of Punjab with the sense of triumph and the feeling of equalling the score had started taunting the Muslims because they claimed the ultimate victory in the Bihar riots. According to Jenkins, "The Hindus are jubilant, they are bad winners and will do anything to taunt and humiliate Muslims".⁹⁵ Regarding the Sikhs he said the "Sikh speakers are anti British and anti-Muslim and the Sikh speakers are the most violent in Punjab".⁹⁶ Between November 1946 and February 1947, the League's attitude to the interim government, its attempt to overthrow the Unionist ministry in Punjab, its refusal to enter the constituent assembly, and to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan - all signified its intent to achieve Pakistan.⁹⁷ The attitude of the Hindu and Sikh leaders of Punjab was now turning out to be hysterical and provocative but it was mostly due to the arrogance of the Muslim League towards minorities. Khizar Hyat Khan's resignation had shocked his Hindu and Sikh colleagues who now decided not to cooperate with the Muslim League government. Meanwhile, on February 20, 1947, prime minister Attlee announced in the House of Commons that his government had decided to transfer power not later than June 30, 1948.⁹⁸

The Hindu nationalist's reaction to the statement of the British prime minister was of utter disregard. They charged the rulers, "By putting such a heavy premium on Muslim intransigence the British Government is instigating civil strife and disorder. We are afraid that instead of solving the deadlock the statement would give rise to chaos(...)"⁹⁹

95. TOP, Volume-8, p. 371.

96. Ibid.

97. Anita Inder Singh, op. cit., p. 203.

98. Raghuvendra Tanwar, op. cit., p. 108.

99. Hindu Outlook, Delhi, February 25, 1947.

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was of the view that they would accept the proposals of the transfer of power provided it was handed over to a strong central government to avoid the chaos.¹⁰⁰ Though the Hindu leaders were often critical of Congress and ambitions of Nehru, but their views on the transfer of power to the strong government, resembled. There was real feeling of fear among the Hindu nationalists that the proposed scheme might divide India.¹⁰¹ They charged the Indian National Congress of betraying the cause of a united India. They said that the Congress resolutions of the acceptance of Atlee's statement had given a final blow to the integrity and unity of this ancient land and had surrendered Pakistan to the Muslims. The D.A.V. College, Lahore, was the bastion of the Hindu nationalism among the Hindu students and while addressing the students of this college, the Hindu Mahasabha secretary, Deshpande rued that the proposal was a challenge to Hindu India.¹⁰² The feeling among the grass root Hindu Mahasabhites was one of disappointment. They even disapproved the statements of Savarkar and Moonje regarding Atlee's proposals. According to the Mahasabha mouthpiece,

"It is unfortunate that the prophet of Hindu nationalism like Veer Savarkar should have blessed the ill advised move and the powerful champion of the Hindu cause like Dr. S.P. Mookerjee should have come forward to advocate and popularize a plan which would pave the way for Pakistan".¹⁰³

As the reality of Pakistan came nearer the communal strife and propaganda assumed dangerous proportions. The communal organizations formed for the protection of their respective

100. Ibid., March 4, 1947.

101. Ibid., March 11, 1947.

102. Ibid., March 18, 1947.

103. Ibid., April 22, 1947.

communities virtually carried the day. According to Wavell, the decision to ban the two institutions which were really the private armies, the RSS and MLNG, was met with opposition from the Muslim League. So the ban on both was withdrawn and he further added that the situation was dangerous and the rival communities were not balanced and there was restiveness among the Hindu and the Sikh communities which was heading Punjab to take violent form.¹⁰⁴ The Sikhs under Master Tara Singh were also organizing their own army in response to the Muslim League National Guard.¹⁰⁵ To the provocations of the Muslim leader regarding Pakistan (*Lad ke leyng Pakistan, Jaise liya tha Hindusthan*), the Hindu nationalists said that Hindus were also capable of doing same and the Muslims needed to be ready.¹⁰⁶ On March 4, the Hindu students organized massive demonstrations at Gol Bagh, Lahore and which were also joined by the Sikh students. By this time the Police had also been communalized and so it used brutal force on the young students.¹⁰⁷ The situation of Punjab therefore was turning out to be nightmarish and the total number of deaths reported during the disturbances was 10,538 in the villages and 511 in the cities.¹⁰⁸ But these disturbances were just the shadow of the events yet to come. According to Pendrel Moon, "What had been seen in Punjab in March 1947 was only a curtain raiser. The main tragedy was still to come".¹⁰⁹

After the acceptance of the partition proposal, sensing

104. TOP, Volume-9, pp. 805-809.

105. The Tribune, Lahore, March 2, 1947.

106. Hindu Outlook, Delhi, February 25, 1947.

107. The Tribune, Lahore, March 5, 1947: Also see Hindu Outlook, March 18, 1947.

108. N.N.Mitra, Indian Annual Register, 1946-47, NMML, Volume-I, March 17, 1947, p. 233

109. Pendrel Moon, Divide and Quit, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 93, 94.

urgency, the partitioning of the Punjab was put into effect straight away. Sir Cyril Radcliffe was appointed as the chairman of the Boundary Commission and the Award given by him was as fair as it could be for Hindus and Muslims.¹¹⁰ The Muslim dominated West Punjab was separated from the East Punjab dominated by the Hindus and the Sikhs. The partition witnessed unprecedented communal disharmony and violence which paradoxically was meant and devised to check the same. On August 14-15, 1947, India and Pakistan emerged as two sovereign nations having no links with each other except by treaty.¹¹¹

Resettlement of the Refugees:

The political decision of the partition resulted in an unprecedented transfer of population with over 13 million people crossed the borders. Over 4 million refugees from West Punjab crossed into the East Punjab and larger number of Muslims from the Indian side went over to Pakistan. The resettlement of the refugees was now the primary task for the government. The rehabilitation of the urban refugees was taken over by the central government while the rural emigrants were to be settled by the state government of Punjab. In the resettlement efforts various Hindu organizations like Hindu Sabha, Arya Sabha and the Punjab Relief Committee seconded the government.¹¹² The government policy of dealing with the refugees however was not satisfactory and even drew flak from Punjab Congress leader G.C.Bhargava.¹¹³ The government now started encouraging sending refugees back to the towns of Punjab

110. Kushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 277, 278.

111. Anita Inder Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 235

112, Hindustan Times, Delhi, October 18, 1947.

113. Raghuvendra Tanwar, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

who had flooded Delhi.¹¹⁴ The problem of the land allocation was also severe. The non-Muslims in West Punjab had abandoned about 6.7 million acres of land of which 4.3 million acres was irrigated.¹¹⁵ A scheme of graded cuts was adopted to provide land succour in which the small farmers suffered a little, while the big landholders lost much of their land. Equally important was the attention given to the irrigation schemes. A new University, a new High Court and eventually a new capital, were established at Chandigarh.

The partition, rehabilitation and resettlement brought significant changes in the economic, social, political and demographic structure of Punjab. The economic status of the migrant Hindus and Sikhs in particular was lowered as compared to the previous one, because the property and land left by the Muslims in Indian Punjab was much less than that which had been left out by these communities in the Western Punjab. The class barriers were lowered and the land ceiling which had been made compulsory furthered the leveling process. The demographic pattern in Punjab too witnessed a great shift from the earlier one. In 1951 the Hindus formed 62 percent of the population and Sikhs constituted 35 percent. The Hindus in the state were now a majority and the Sikhs, a substantial minority. Areawise, the Hindu population was concentrated mostly in the eastern part of the Punjab where as the Sikhs mostly inhabited the central districts. In 1948, the Sikh principalities of Punjab along with Malerkotla and Nalagarh were merged to form the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU). But in 1956 with the active part played by the Praja Mandal movement, the government abolished PEPSU and

114. *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, October 7, 1947.

115. Vakil, *The Economic Consequences of Divided India*, Vora and Co. Publishers, 1950, p. 160.

merged it with East Punjab. The first general elections took place in 1952, which the Congress party won with huge majority and Bhim Sen Sachar became the first chief minister of Punjab.¹¹⁶

However, in between all these developments that were taking place in Punjab's society, polity and economy, the national level happenings had started casting their shadow on this province. Gandhi's fast on the transfer of cash balances did not go well with the Hindu and the Sikh nationalists of Punjab.¹¹⁷ The Punjab unit of the Hindu Mahasabha met in Amritsar on January 19 and resolved that the conditions set by Gandhi for ending the fast were one-sided and clearly favoured Pakistan.¹¹⁸ They accused Gandhi of strengthening Pakistan which had not curtailed its policy of sponsoring violence in the valley even while he was on fast.¹¹⁹ The Sikh leader Master Tara Singh too was equally critical of Gandhi's attitude and advised him to retire and not to interfere in the government affairs as 'Super Prime Minister.'¹²⁰ Even the moderate opinion mobilizers like, The Tribune, did not favour Gandhiji's tactics and asked him to concentrate now on securing justice for the Hindus and the Sikhs of Punjab.¹²¹ Also during these years the affinities between the Hindu and the Sikh nationalists had started strengthening. In the Hindu Mahasabha rally at Delhi Master Tara Singh displayed great enthusiasm.¹²² This closeness of the Hindu and Sikh leaders chagrined many in the Congress circles who at one stage were contemplating to restrict the activities of the RSS and even Akali Dal. In such a scenario Mahatma

116. J.S.Garewal, *op.cit.*, pp. 181, 182.

117. Kushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-288.

118. *Statesman*, Delhi, January 21, 1948.

119. *Milap*, Jalandhar, January 21 and 26, 1948.

120. *The Tribune*, Simla, January 25, 1948.

121. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1948.

122. *Statesman*, January 28, 1948.

Gandhi was assassinated and his death was deeply mourned both in East and West Punjab.¹²³ The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha too suspended their activities for the entire duration of the mourning.¹²⁴

Punjab from 1952-1966:

After independence the linguistic reorganization of the states gathered momentum. But in the case of Punjab which had been recently divided such a proposition according to the Indian leaders and particularly Nehru was to be avoided, because they felt that in this border province unity was more important than any of the merits of reorganization.¹²⁵ The Punjab was declared a bilingual province with both Hindi and Punjabi as its languages. The Sikhs, particularly the Akalis resented this and explained that the spoken language of Punjab has been Punjabi, except in the Haryana region and most of the literature has been in *Gurumukhi* script. They demanded that the Punjabi in *Gurumukhi* script should only be the language and script of Punjab, which in other words was the demand of Punjabi *Suba*, which in fact was the demand for Sikh state.¹²⁶

The language issue in Punjab had been communalized. It assumed the form of a major political issue in the post-independence Punjab, in which Hindu and the Sikh literate elites tried to persuade the Punjabi masses that if they were Hindu, they spoke Hindi, and ought to learn and write *Devanagari* and that if they were Sikh, they ought to learn, to write Punjabi exclusively in *Gurumukhi* script.¹²⁷

123. For details see Raghuvendra Tanwar, op. cit., 579-581.

124. *The Tribune*, Simla, February 4, 1948.

125. Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Punjabi Suba*, U.C.Kapur and Sons, Delhi, 1970, p. 186.

126. Kushwant Singh, op. cit., pp. 294-295. Also see Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966, pp. 322, 323.

127. P.R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Vikas Publishers, New Delhi, 1975, p. 309.

The Hindu organizations in Punjab saw it as an attempt to establish Sikh domination in the state. The Hindu leadership most of whom were the Arya Samajists backed Hindi. The Hindu nationalists even proposed for the formation of *Maha Punjab* to provide effective frontier territory on vital border with Pakistan and Hindi should be the language of education here replacing English and Urdu.¹²⁸ The 'Sachar Formula' devised by Bhim Sen Sachar in 1949 to accommodate the Sikh concern too failed to remove the deadlock. In the census of 1951, the Hindu nationalist leadership of Punjab persuaded the Hindus to record Hindi as their mother tongue on the assumption that this would negate the argument for the formation of Punjabi speaking state.¹²⁹ But this reaction of the Hindus provoked counter reaction from Akalis who adopted resolution for the formation of Punjabi *Suba*. The Sikh uneasiness may also be attributed to the resurgence of Hinduism which threatened to engulf the minorities and they had started fearing that after playing a balancing role between the two communities before 1947 and inspite of being a minority in the new state they were considered as a real threat to the Punjabi Hindus.¹³⁰

The State Reorganization Commission was appointed in December 1953, to deliberate into the vexed issue of redrawing the boundaries. A lot of communal heat and tension was generated in which the Akalis and the Arya Samajists together with Jana Sanghites adopted opposite postures. The Commission presented its report two years later rejecting the case of Punjabi speaking state.¹³¹ The anti-

128. Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 100, 101.

129. Kailash Chander Gulati op. cit., p. 157.

130. K.G.Lamba, *The Dynamics of Punjabi Suba Movement*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1999, p. 52.

131. Paul Brass, op. cit., p. 320.

Sikh and anti-Hindu slogans had now become order of the day and to control the situation government decided to impose a ban on shouting slogans.¹³² The Akali Dal under Master Tara Singh defied the ban but was arrested, so soon a morcha was launched by the Akali Dal against the ban.¹³³ Though the ban was lifted but the demand was not conceded. The Akalis presented various delegations to the central leadership but fetched no result. On December 1955, a conference at Amritsar was called by both, those favouring '*Maha Punjab*' and by the '*Punjabi Suba*' protagonists. By now, Nehru too had developed some soft corner for the Akali demand and was prepared to accommodate. Therefore, again a new formula was in the offing.¹³⁴

The 'Regional Formula' of 1956 was another attempt to resolve the issue. It was welcomed by the Akalis but the Maha Punjab Samiti and the Arya Samajists decided to resist it by all possible means.¹³⁵ Fifty Congress members took a deputation to Nehru and submitted a memorandum and one of them Lala Jagat Naraiyan (Press icon) wrote openly against the regional formula in the press.¹³⁶ The Akalis' happiness over the Regional Formula led to the electoral understanding between them and the Congress, under which Dal would not have separate political programme and would concentrate its energy on religious issues. The new Punjab state with linguistically separate zones according to Regional Formula was thus inaugurated on November 1, 1956.¹³⁷

The cooperation between Akalis and the Congress under

132. Rajiv Kapur, op. cit., p. 213.

133. Nayar, op. cit., p. 242.

134. J.S.Grewal, op. cit., p. 191.

135. Bruce Graham, op. cit., p. 105.

136. Satya M. Rai, *Punjab since Partition*, Durga Publications, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 302.

137. *The Tribune*, Simla, October 3, 1956.

Pratap Singh Kairon however didn't last long. Moreover, 'Save-Hindi' agitation (1957) of the Arya Samajists and the Jana Sanghites further led to the polarization of the communities. Thus the non implementation of the 'Regional Formula' led to the re-emergence of the Punjabi *Suba* demand. In October 1955, first Punjabi Suba Conference was organised in which Master Tara Singh and *Sant* Fateh Singh announced their plans for the attainment of the Punjabi *Suba*.¹³⁸ In 1960 Akalis again launched agitation for the Punjabi Suba in which many Akali leaders including Master Tara Singh were arrested. Fateh Singh at this juncture organised passive resistance on a massive scale. Further, he went on fast unto death for the demand on December 18, 1960.¹³⁹ But in January 1961 on Nehru's assurance the morcha launched by the Akalis was withdrawn, Master Tara Singh was released and *Sant* Fateh Singh was persuaded to give up his fast. A three man commission under the chairmanship of S.R.Das was appointed to look into the matter.¹⁴⁰

However, the vexed issue of Punjabi *Suba* did not seem resolved as the Akalis rejected the commission. Virender, the editor of daily '*Pratap*' and Balraj Madhok, the Jana Sangh leader too vehemently started opposing the demand of Punjabi Suba, along with Lala Jagat Narain, a veteran, Arya Samajist¹⁴¹ The general elections of 1962, too didn't help the cause. Akali Dal by now had been split into two factions one owing allegiance to Master Tara Singh and other to his once deputy *Sant* Fateh Singh. Master Tara Singh's popularity had ebbed due to his breaking up of fast and taking false oath and so he was voted out of power both from SGPC and Akali Dal, which was now

138. J.S.Grewal, op. cit., p. 193.

139. K.G.Lamba, op. cit., p. 99.

140. Kushwant Singh, op. cit., p. 300.

141. K.G.Lamba, op. cit., p. 100.

taken over by *Sant* Fateh Singh's group. The Chinese aggression in October, 1962 however led Akalis to postpone their movement so as to display requisite patriotism.¹⁴²

The political scenario of Punjab changed quickly in the times to come as Nehru died in May, 1964 followed by the deposition and later on assassination of stalwart Kairon in February, 1965. Economically too, at this juncture Punjab was at the threshold of the Green Revolution. The economic growth of Punjab during the early decades owed very much to the policies of Kairon. Moreover, his personality and able foresight worked tremendously against the tide of the Akalis and the Punjabi *Suba* demand. At times he even prevailed upon Nehru to denounce the Akali demand. But his death removed strong stumbling block from the path of Akalis, who now under the leadership of *Sant* Fateh Singh were once again ready to present their demand before Lal Bahadur Shastri, the new prime minister. Following the failure of the talks with the prime minister, *Sant* Fateh Singh resolved to go on fast unto death and if survived for 15 days he promised to immolate himself on the 16th day. But again the Akalis had to postpone their programme in the wake of Pakistani incursion in 1965.¹⁴³

The political scene in India was changing at the rapid pace. The revival of the demand by Akalis led to the formation of a committee under the chairmanship of Hukam Singh.¹⁴⁴ But

142. Ibid., p. 168.

143. Satya M. Rai, op. cit., p. 310.

144. The appointment of Hukam Singh was not liked by Indira Gandhi who was also the member of the Committee. According to her, Hukam Singh was biased towards the demand of Punjabi Suba. She wanted him to stop giving report in favour of Punjabi Suba. For an insightful account of the Congress attitude, see Indira Gandhi, *My Truth*, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 117.

unfortunately, for India and for the Akalis too, prime minister Shastri died at Tashkent in USSR on January 11, 1966 and Indira Gandhi became the new prime minister. By this time the demand of Punjabi Suba had garnered the support of national leaders too. Alongside, the demand for Haryana too started emerging thus further strengthening the cause of the Punjabi *Suba*. The parliamentary committee appointed for the matter ultimately decided in the favour of re-organization of Punjab on linguistic basis. Shah Commission presented its report to the Congress Parliamentary Party on the basis of which Punjab Reorganization Bill was introduced providing for the creation of Punjab and Haryana. After receiving the president's assent, a Punjabi speaking state was inaugurated on November 1, 1966.¹⁴⁵ The new Punjab that emerged therefore comprised the districts of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Bathinda, Patiala, Sangrur, Rupar and Kharar tehsils of Ambala district.¹⁴⁶

The Sikh political movement thus demonstrated that when an ethnic group turns to politics to achieve group demands, the political movement takes on a life of its own to such an extent that political organizations shape communal identities as well as be shaped by them.¹⁴⁷ The demand for Punjabi speaking state by the Sikh leadership was in fact camouflaged for the Sikh dominant state because of the fact that new rules of the game in new India did not support communal demands. The Hindu leadership at this juncture opposed the demand with the Arya Samaj forming a united

145. J.S.Grewal, op. cit., pp. 203, 204.

146. For details, see Punjab Boundary Commission Report, Government of India Press, New Delhi, Para 125, pp. 148, 149.

147. Paul R. Brass, op. cit., p. 278.

front with the Jana Sangh and the RSS against the Punjabi *Suba*. But when the demand for Haryana as a separate state from Punjab gained voice, a dilemma was generated between these groups as to whether support formation of Haryana or to stick with the idea of '*Maha Punjab*'. There was this cleavage of interests between the Hindus of Punjab and Haryana that worked contrary to each other. Both, the RSS and the Jana Sangh, the Hindu counter parts of the Sikh Akalis could not muster that much support which Akalis were able to generate from the Sikh masses. The clash of cultural interest *vis-à-vis* political and between the local perspective and the broader perspective of Hindu interests worked against the joint effort of the Hindus to contest Punjabi *Suba* demand.¹⁴⁸

So it will probably not to be disputed that Punjab, of all the Indian regions had been the scene of the most intense, bitter, and prolonged cleavages in modern Indian history.¹⁴⁹ This presumption was probably derived from the fact that the communal antagonisms were widespread in the British raj days between the three principal communities. It reached to the brim during 1947, wherein the communal violence became the hallmark of the partition. Things changed, communal cleavages soothed only to crop up once again during the language controversy and the Punjabi *Suba* agitation. But during this time there were two alterations; one, the absence of Muslim community and two, the absence of violence though it too raised its head during the terrorist phase. But that is a separate issue on which many researches have been done.

Punjab from 1966-1984:

The formation of the Punjabi *Suba* however had not drawn

148. Ibid., p. 332.

149. Ibid., p. 337.

the curtain on Punjab's problems in general and aspirations of the Akalis in particular. They were dissatisfied with the common links that had been left between the two states of Punjab and Haryana *viz.* common governor, common high court, common electricity board, and common capital (which was also made union territory), common financial and housing corporations *etc.* Further, many Punjabi speaking areas which the Akalis and other protagonists of the Punjabi *Suba* felt to be included in Punjab, were given to Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Moreover, the central government's control over Chandigarh and Bhakra-Beas-Dam Projects was also chagrined by them. On the other hand, the Jana Sanghis and the Arya Samajists were also disgruntled with the Congress for conceding the Punjabi Suba demand and therefore were continuously opposing it. But soon they reconciled to the reality of the Punjabi *Suba* and even advised the Hindu populace to own Punjabi. In 1966, Balraj Madhok in his presidential address to the Jana Sangh cadres called for his party's acceptance of the division of Punjab on linguistic basis.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, M.S.Golwalkar while touring Punjab in April 1966, too called upon the Punjabi Hindus to accept Punjabi as their mother tongue but again stressing that Punjabi was merely a spoken language or a dialect of Hindi.¹⁵¹ The observation of Paul Brass here is note worthy as he viewed the course of the Hindu-Sikh political conflict in Punjab on the language issue was not really linguistic but communal and it was exploited for the political advantages. So the creation of the Punjabi *Suba* by no means resolved the language controversy but only reversed the positions of two leading protagonist groups.¹⁵²

150. Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1969, p. 255.

151. *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, April 14, 1966.

152. Paul R. Brass, *op. cit.*, pp. 341, 342.

After the formation of Punjabi *Suba*, the Hindu nationalists modified their position significantly. They acquiesced in the passage of the Punjab Official Language Act, 1967.¹⁵³ They now even recognized Punjabi as a spoken language of Punjab with Hindi as the language of usage of a very large section of the people in the state.¹⁵⁴ But still they insisted on the freedom of choice of the medium of instruction in the private schools. In any case the RSS now also wanted that the official notices be published in Hindi as well as in Punjabi. This, however, was the realpolitik of the Hindu nationalists who by this time acknowledged their secondary position *vis-à-vis* ever assertive Akalis with whom they forged electoral understanding in the days to come.

In spite of the political differences before the formation of Punjabi *Suba*, the Akali Dal and the Jana Sangh along with other parties contested the elections of 1967 under the banner of the United Front. This elucidates the compulsions of the realpolitik. But still disgruntled, the Akali Dal due to the common links with Haryana and on river water sharing issues, launched morchas. *Sant* Fateh Singh declared his fast unto death on December 17, 1966. But on the assurance of Hukam Singh on the behalf of Indira Gandhi, he was persuaded to break his fast. The other faction of the Akali Dal going a step further in 1967 demanded special status to new Punjab, like Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁵⁵ But these demands now had a little effect on the Punjabi masses who were now more inclined towards the economic and other developmental aspects of Punjab.

153. Ibid., p. 337.

154. The statement of the Jana Sangh manifesto of 1972, cited in the *Spokesman*, Delhi, January 10, 1972.

155. J.S.Grewal, op. cit., pp. 205-207.

In much diminished Punjab after the elections of 1967, communal differences reflected in the organization of the political parties and were prominent in the electoral arena. But they were accommodated after the elections in the inter-party coalition building to govern the state. The Hindu nationalists and the Akalis succeeded in dislodging the Congress from dominant position.¹⁵⁶ The desire for communal harmony and respective political interests was the driving force behind it. So for the first time after independence, a non-Congress government was formed in Punjab with the coalition of the Akali Dal, the Jana Sangh and the Communists. But factionalism led to the fall of this government. Moreover, the inter-party strains between the Jana Sangh and the Communists on one hand and the Akalis and the Communists on the other led to ideological discomfort among them.¹⁵⁷ Another alliance was reached at in 1969 for the mid term elections which again resulted in the formation of coalition government but only to broke shortly on June 30, 1970, when the Jana Sangh withdrew support on the issues concerning the jurisdiction of new Punjabi medium university over the Hindi medium colleges.¹⁵⁸ The Congress emerged as the beneficiary of this collapse with its superior organization and inter-communal character.

Once again, on the issue of the inclusion of Chandigarh and other Punjabi speaking areas into Punjab *Sant* Fateh Singh announced his decision to go on fast in the forthcoming Republic Day, January 26, 1970 and to immolate on February 1.¹⁵⁹ He decided so

156. For details please refer to Paul R. Brass, "Coalition Politics in North India", *American Political Science Review*, LX II, No.4, December, 1968.

157. A.S.Narang, *Storm Over Satluj : The Akali Politics*, Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 181-183.

158. *Patriot*, June 30, 1970. Also see *Spokesman*, Delhi, April 27, 1970.

159. *Times of India*, Delhi, November 25, 1969.

because of the death of Darshan Singh Pheruman in October, 1969 for the same purpose and thus tried unsuccessfully to be like him. The prime minister Indira Gandhi meanwhile announced her Award on January 29, 1970, by giving Chandigarh to Punjab but also including the parts of Fazilka tehsil in Haryana. An All Parties Action Committee was organized to consider the award under the chairmanship of Jana Sangh leader Baldev Prakash, which denounced the Award. But at the same time they persuaded *Sant* Fateh Singh to give up the fast.¹⁶⁰

The factionalism in the Punjab politics is not a new phenomenon. The same happened in 1970 when *Sant* Fateh Singh expelled both chief minister Gurnam Singh and *Giani* Bhupinder Singh from the Akali Dal. These developments again resulted into the formation of Akali-Jana Sangh coalition government in March 1970 with Parkash Singh Badal as the chief minister.¹⁶¹ Though Akali leadership was unhappy with the award, but now they focused on the federalism and centre-state relations. Their election manifesto of 1972 laid stress on greater provincial autonomy with minimal central interference. The relations between the RSS in general and the Jana Sangh in particular, with the Akalis however often got strained due to former's more emphasis on parity of Hindi with Punjabi and change in the jurisdiction of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. But the results of 1972 elections proved disaster for both erstwhile partners with Congress under Indira Gandhi swept the polls and *Giani* Zail Singh was appointed as the chief minister.¹⁶²

The socio-political situation of Punjab was assuming myriad hues with each passing year. The debacle of 1972 elections forced Akalis to adjust their political goal to the realities of political

160. J.S.Grewal, op. cit., p. 208.

161. D.C.Pavte, *My Days as Governor*, Vikas, Delhi, 1974, p. 139.

162. *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, March 15, 1972.

life in the Punjabi *Suba* and broaden its social and ethnic base.¹⁶³ The Akalis, true to their radical stance, adopted Anandpur Sahib Resolution which had a certain affinity with the Sikh homeland demand of Master Tara Singh. This resolution proved to be the most controversial of all the Akali resolutions. Meanwhile on the national sphere, Congress under Indira Gandhi was desperately trying to save its skin when Allahabad High Court in a verdict declared her election in 1972 as *ultra vires*. The Internal Emergency was clamped on June 25, 1975, thereby resulting in heavy crackdown on the opposition leaders. The Akali and the Jana Sangh leadership at this juncture threw up their fortunes with Jai Prakash Narayan.¹⁶⁴

During the anti-Emergency struggle both Akalis and the Jana Sanghites, most of whom were of the RSS background launched disobedience thereby sending *jathas* to fill the jails. An important phenomenon that took place during their stay in the jail was the secularization process of both Akalis and the RSS people.¹⁶⁵ They further came closer to each other which paved the way for better understanding between them. The Emergency period lasted from 1975 to 1977 and after that elections were announced. The Congress was routed in 1977 parliamentary elections paving the way for the formation of Janta Party government of which both Jana Sangh and the Akalis were active allies. In Punjab too, the Akalis, the Jana Sangh and other partners of Janta Party coalition at the centre formed the government.

The dynamism of Punjab as in other spheres was very much evident in fast changing social and political conditions. The inter

163. Paul R. Brass op. cit., p. 433.

164. Ibid., p. 323.

165. Ibid., p. 323.

and intra-party contradictions began to resurface with the straining of relations between the Janta Party dominated by the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal, as latter once again had started resonating its commitment to the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Among the Akalis also there was growing tussle between its ministerial and organizational wings.¹⁶⁶ The organizational wing of the Akalis was more radical, religiously fanatic and was dominated by the clergy whose prominent members were Tohra and Talwandi. The Jana Sangh leadership's discomfiture with separatist and fundamentalist policies of the Akalis resulted into the resignation of Janta Party members from the coalition government, thus reducing coalition to minority which lasted till February 1980, but ultimately bringing Congress to power.¹⁶⁷

The Terrorist and Secessionist Movement:¹⁶⁸

The developments that took place in late 1970s and 1980s had shaken the people of Punjab, India and the Indians living in different parts of the world. This was the cult of violence and terrorism that had encompassed the whole socio-political life of Punjab. The genesis of terrorism in Punjab could not be attributed to

166. Ibid., p. 325

167. Ibid.

168. The information given in this part of the text has been culled from various secondary sources who have written authoritatively on the Punjab terrorism, its origin, events and impact. The main readings included -

1. Kuldip Nayyar and Kushwant Singh, *Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Blue Star and After* Vision Books, New Delhi, 1984.
2. Satya M. Rai, *Punjab since Partition*, Durga Publications, New Delhi, 1986.
3. Abida Samiuddin (ed.), *Punjab Crisis*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1985.
4. A.C.Kapur, *Punjab Crisis: An Analytical Study*, S.Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1986.
5. H.K.Puri, P.S.Judge and Jagrup Singh Sekhon, *Terrorism in Punjab: Understanding Grassroot Reality*, Har Anand, New Delhi, 1999.

any single cause. Rather it was the complex interplay of multi dimensional factors which lead Punjab to a wretched condition making it unsafe for the general living of its populace, particularly the minority community. The Punjab crisis had its origin in socio-economic, psychological and political problems.¹⁶⁹ Though not going into the detailed deliberations on the origin of terrorism as the present study ends in 1984. I would rather focus on the events and happenings in Punjab during the early phase of terrorist violence.

The intolerant fundamentalism which was the manifestation of Punjab problem hit first in the limelight when Nirankari congregation was attacked by the radical Akalis allegedly instigated by Bhindranwala on April 13, 1978 at Amritsar.¹⁷⁰ The Akali practice of linking anything on earth with '*Dharam Yudh*' or religion in danger was amply demonstrated in this event which led to the loss of 13 lives. The sequel of the events after this incident spoke themselves of the state of affairs during the approaching times in Punjab. The countering of Akali fundamentalism with equally strong violent fundamentalist appeal of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala supported and encouraged allegedly by the Congress (I)¹⁷¹ went other way round in the times to come. After the Akali-Nirankari clash, there initiated a long series of killings by the terrorists whom they thought and construed as enemies of the Sikh *Panth*. *Baba* Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankari *guru*, was murdered in Delhi on April 24, 1980; *Lala* Jagat Narain, a veteran Congress leader, an Arya Samajist and the

169. For an analytical account of the grassroot level origin of the terrorist movement and socio-political causations leading to violence please refer to H.K.Puri, P.S.Judge and Jagrup Singh Sekhon, op.cit.

170. Justice V.M.Tarkunde in, *Citizens for Democracy, Report to the Nation: Oppression in Punjab*, Hind Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat Publications, Delhi, 1985, p. 16.

171. Satya M. Rai, op. cit., p. 326.

proprietor-editor of chain of newspapers was assassinated on September 9, 1981. On the way to Ludhiana, later on his son Ramesh Chandra too fell to the terrorist violence.¹⁷²

The wave of terror that was started with the Akali-Nirankari clash assumed serious proportions with the terrorists started openly targeting the Hindus, Nirankaris, police and those Sikhs who courageously spoke against their creed. The Hindus were further horrified and alienated when the Akalis went on honouring the extremists who were the suspects of murder and violence with '*Siropas*'.¹⁷³ Akalis for the fulfillment of their aims launched crusade against the government and termed it as '*Dharam Yudh*'. They resorted to the methods such as *nahar roko* (prevent the digging of canals) *rasta roko* (block traffic), *rail roko* (stop trains) and *kam roko* (stop work) to paralyze the government. They deliberately choose Republic Day to stage demonstrations and even threatened to disrupt the Asian Games to be held in November-December 1982. Supplementing to this, there was a parallel crusade carried on by the terrorists by murder and mayhem. Many gurudwaras including Golden Temple had virtually become the bastions of illicit arms and shelters of anti social elements.¹⁷⁴

The indiscriminated violence against the Hindus resulted in the Hindu backlash with the formation of Hindu Suraksha Samiti which started asserting itself through bandhs and retaliatory attacks. Interestingly, the RSS kept away from retaliating as Bala Saheb Deoras, the *sarsanghchalak* had told his workers to refrain from any attack on Sikhs, as they considered the Sikhs as part and parcel of the

172. Anup Chand Kapur, op. cit., pp. 237-239.

173. Dr. Abida Samiuddin (ed.), op. cit., pp. 128, 129.

174. Anup Chand Kapur, op. cit., p. 238.

Hindus.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, other separatist leaders were also entering into the fray for *Khalistan*, more prominently were Ganga Singh Dhillon and Jagjit Singh Chauhan. In the Sikh Educational Conference, at Chandigarh they even passed a resolution demanding UN membership for the Sikhs and their treatment as a separate nation. The killing spree by the terrorists was assuming dangerous proportions. The killings of Harbans Lal Khurana, president of Hindu Surakhsa Samiti, Sumeet Singh a clean shaven Sikh editor of *Preetlari*, Punjabi Professor V.N.Tiwari of the Punjab University and the member of Rajya Sabha, were continuously shaking the society. The killing of D.I.G. Police Jalandhar, A.S.Atwal, on April 25, 1984, however led government think seriously about a strong iron willed action against the terrorists in the Golden Temple.¹⁷⁶

Operation Blue Star:¹⁷⁷ The most prominent Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal knew that Bhindranwala had accumulated weapons inside the temple precincts. The possibility of military action therefore was imminent as major Kuldip Singh Brar, a clean shaven Sikh had recently paid visits to the Golden temple in order to judge the situation inside. The command of the operation was given to lieutenant general Ranjit Singh Dayal. On June 6, Operation was launched; Longowal and Tohra were captured and later on freed. After the Operation Akal Takhat was cleaned with the apostles of terror found dead in the basement.¹⁷⁸

The army assault on the Golden Temple sent a wave of indignation among all the Sikhs in India and abroad. This assault in

175. Abida Samiuddin (ed.), op. cit., p. 141.

176. Kuldip Nayar and Kushwant Singh, op. cit., p. 76.

177. For the Government of India's version see *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, Government of India, 1984.

178. Anup Chand Kapur, op. cit., p. 251.

one aspect highlighted the tremendous mismanagement of the affairs of the state by the government and brought a collective humiliation of a whole community which had ominous implications.¹⁷⁹ On the other side of the religious spectrum, the Hindus too were swept off with the feelings of indignation, suspicion and terror. The word Sikh in their mindset had become synonymous to extremist. For example, the killing of a prominent Hindu leader in Hoshiarpur produced Hindu mob violence against the ordinary Sikhs. Therefore, as the Sikh sub nationalism and their quest for separatism gained momentum, so did Hindu resistance to it. The terrorism did enormous harm to the Hindu-Sikh relations because the killers were invariably the Sikhs and targets were the Hindus or the liberal Sikhs. Though the common populace of Punjab did not adopt any antagonistic postures *vis-à-vis* each other but still the feeling of mutual suspicion and distrust loomed large over them. Surely, this had widened the rift among the two communities and further alienated Sikhs from the mainstream. However, in spite of the wider implications of these events, in those times there were only few probable alternatives at the disposal. The extra-ordinary situations warrant extra ordinary measures. The terrorism in Punjab did not ended with Operation Blue Star nor was the fear of state machinery instilled in the minds of disgruntled Sikhs. As the history of Punjab after this point of time is beyond the ambit of my research therefore, I end up my discussion in order to restrict myself to prescribed historical time frame.

Conclusion:

The history of Punjab in its demographic, social and political aspects assumed different contours during the time frame of

179. Harish K. Puri and P.S.Judge, (eds.), *Social and Political Movements*, Rawat, Jaipur, 2000, p. 386.

present study. A comprehensive view of the events taking place during all these years endows us with an insight into the state of affairs. The vast stretches of Punjab in the beginning of 20th century that touched NWFP in the west to Kashmir in the north, Sindh and Rajputana in the south to United provinces in the east were drastically reduced during partition in 1947, when most of its area went to Pakistan. Further trifurcation of Punjab occurred in 1966 with the separation of Punjabi *Suba* (modern day Punjab) from the Hindi speaking areas which were demarcated into Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The geographical changes in Punjab were accompanied by demographic distributions. The Muslim majority of pre-partition era now reduced to an insignificant minority, with the Hindus assuming majority followed by the Sikhs. Again in 1966 the boundaries of the Punjab were readjusted to suit the whims and fancies of the politicians and the communal leaders, whereby making Hindu dominated areas separate from Sikh dominated central districts. The social and religious milieu of Punjab too suffered set back during these years and was changed to accommodate the realpolitik.

The socio-politico-cultural environment of Punjab from the beginning of 20th century was in total disarray owing largely to the British masters and their policies. The disaffection among the various communities inspite of their occasional united front against the colonialism was fuelled by various socio-religious reform movements started to reform and uplift their respective communities. This mutual distrust among various factions ultimately resulted in two partitions of Punjab and nearly surviving a third one during the terrorist movement in 1980s, when the wise counsel prevailed upon the people. The social and political issues in pre and post independence Punjab always coincided with religion, thus assuming communal overtones. The Hindu right wing, be it Arya Samaj, Hindu Sabha, Maha Sabha or later

on RSS in had their fair share in these issues, whether in precipitating the crisis or by suggesting viable alternatives.

In the next chapter, I would trace the history of the RSS in the background of the history of Punjab depicted in this chapter. The genesis of the RSS in Punjab and its subsequent development through the years therefore, needs to be comprehended in relation to changing scenarios of Punjab form time to time. The conditions and circumstances under which the RSS took birth here changed over the times. The circumstances in the Punjab of 1930's were markedly different from 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, the exigencies and priorities of those times, as also the frame of mind of the Hindu populace were quite different from their present disposition. The role assumed by the RSS in those years was, therefore, no longer remained relevant in the present times. Moreover, the allied Hindu organizations *viz.* Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Dev Samaj which worked in tandem during those times no longer assumed much active and radical role now. So this factor has also to be taken into consideration while focusing on the RSS. Yet another factor that too has to be viewed is that the majority of Hindu dominated areas did not remain in Punjab where earlier RSS had a considerable presence. So working in majority conditions and then in minority had its own repercussions, as was evident from the killings of the *swayamsevaks* during terrorism in Punjab. So in the coming chapters it will be my serious endeavour to study the subject by taking all the circumstances, ever-changing people's mindset and the RSS, in perspective.

Chapter 3

The Birth and Growth of the RSS in Punjab: 1935-1946

In this chapter we shall discuss the establishment of the RSS in Punjab and its growth for the initial ten years in the region. This chapter will be the continuum of the previous two chapters wherein we have discussed the phenomenon called RSS in the national perspective (chapter 1) and the socio-political situation of Punjab during the time frame of my study *i.e.* 1935-1984 (Chapter-2). In this chapter, I will be aiming at the study of formative phase of the RSS in Punjab which will broadly be including the process of plantation of the RSS in a relatively alien territory *vis-à-vis* Maharashtra in terms of both social and political milieu. Further, the interaction of various congenial and hostile forces present and operating in Punjab with the RSS will be discussed. This precisely means that in this chapter we will be discussing the relation of the RSS with organizations of similar and different ilk in Punjab. The class character of the RSS in Punjab along with their social and educational background and the way this organization acclimatized itself here, too will be the issue of discussion. These ten years' initial phase of the RSS establishment here had a discernible impact on the course of its history which we will be looking at. To substantiate the history of the RSS growth in the pre-independence India and the pre-partitioned Punjab various incidents and examples of the *swayamsevaks* will be mentioned. The work of these people in the *Sangh* machinery, at individual levels and at various small time places, will provide us with an insight into the growth and working of the RSS here. And finally this chapter will serve as a launching pad to the events forth coming *i.e.* the role of the RSS in the riots, partition and rehabilitation, which will be dealt in the subsequent chapter.

In the biography of Hedgewar ¹ the reference of Punjab for the first time comes on page number 340. This reference was made in the context of ever increasing aggressiveness of the Muslims and the Christians in the northern part of India. Contextualising the situation, Babu Padamraj Jain of Calcutta repeatedly in his correspondence with Hedgewar urged him to visit Punjab and Uttar Pradesh². Dharamvir, the son-in-law of Arya Samajist leader Parmanand of Lahore, too in his letter written on October 3, 1935 discussed the adverse communal situation of Punjab and therefore the need for an organization. He wrote, "(...) *Hinduon ki stithi atyant nazuk hai. Samudaiyak atam sangrakshan ki kala avgat karne ke uddaishey se mein aapke sath rehna chahta hoon. Ek anaya sajjan bhi mere saath ayenge*".

[The situation of Hindus is very delicate. In order to learn the art of communal self-defence, I want to stay with you. Another gentleman will also be accompanying me].³

Soon after this letter at the instance of Parmanand one Inderprakash wrote an invitation to Hedgewar strongly inviting him for participating in the conference of the Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Yuvak Parishad, which was to take place in January 1936. At the end of the invitation it was requested "(...) *aap sangathan karne ke liye hamare kharch par kam se kam ek varsh ke liye Punjab mein avashaye rehein*".

[(...) for the *Sangathan* purpose, you are requested to stay in Punjab for at least one year on our expenditure].⁴

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1. N.H. Palkar, Dr. Hedgewar Charitra (Hindi), Lokhit Parkashan, Lucknow, 2000.
 2. Ibid., p. 340.
 3. Original text at Dr. Hedgewar Bhavan, Nagpur.
 4. N.H. Palkar, op. cit., p. 340.

This type of correspondence was frequent in those days. And with this Dr. Hedgewar started short listing his candidates for the *Sangh's* work in Punjab who would work with him and extend their support while continuing their studies.

The invitation from a great Arya Samajist (and also a Hindu Mahasabhaite) Punjabi leader was heartily accepted by Hedgewar not for one year but forever. In 1936 the first batch of the *swayamsevaks* was sent to Punjab. The names of some of those *swayamsevaks* which we come across during this period were Janardhan Chinchalkar, Raja Bhau Paturkar and Narayan Rao Puranik. These *swayamsevaks* were allocated to Lahore division.⁵ But later on reorganization was done and along with Lahore, other regions too got their first lot of pracharaks. So, K.D.Joshi was sent to Sialkot, Rajabhau Paturkar remained at Lahore and Mukandrao Gore to Rawalpindi (the name of Moreshwar Moonje was also heard of as the first *pracharak* of Rawalpindi).⁶ These Maharashtrian youth were given the workable training of Hindi and the knowledge of other regional aspects of Punjab, at Nagpur. Besides doing the *Sangh's* duty, they also continued their studies.

In the coming two years *i.e.* till 1938 the progress made by the RSS in the region was tremendous. The *pracharaks* worked out the modalities of activity expansion in Punjab. Gradually, the Punjabis too started taking pains for the growth of this organization. Many Punjabi youths joined the *Sangh*. The names that deserve to be mentioned were Ram Lal Ghadia in Sunam, Balvir Sharma in Montgomery, Satpal Kaka in Amritsar, Ram Singh in Amritsar, Kapur

5. Ibid., p. 350.

6. Interview with Kashmiri Lal, Former Punjab *prant pracharak* of the RSS, on 25 February, 2006, at Amritsar.

Chand Jain in Amritsar, Badridas and many others.⁷ The number of *shakhas* in the various districts of Punjab too grew exponentially and at various centres in Punjab groups of the *swayamsevaks* started cropping up to take on the responsibility envisaged by Hedgewar. During his tours Hedgewar met various prominent personalities of Punjab and among others most important of them were Parmanand, Narendranath, and Gokul Chand Narang⁸, to whom later on Hedgewar invited for presiding over Dussehra festival celebrations at Nagpur⁹. These leaders helped Hedgewar with wherewithal for expanding the *Sangh's* work in initial stages.

RSS's Punjab : The Territorial Division

The territorial area of Punjab during the pre-independence days was much larger than the present times' *i.e.* post 1966, Punjab. Punjab then comprised of West Punjab upto NWFP now in Pakistan to East Punjab which is modern day Haryana, parts of Himachal Pradesh and in the south upto Rajputana. But from the point of view of the *Sangh's* work, Punjab province was divided into seven divisions. These were:

1. Multan:- This division included seven districts namely; Mianwali, Montgomery, Khanewal, Dera Gazi Khan, Muzafargarh, Dera Ismail Khan and Multan.
2. Rawalpindi:- In this division there were five districts including Jehlum, Gujrat, Haripur, Peshawar and Campbellpur.
3. Lyallpur:- This division had Lyallpur, Gujranwala, Jhang, Sargodha and Sheikhpura *i.e.* total of five districts.

7. Ibid. Also his small extract '*Punjab Mein Sangh Karya Ka Vistaar*', (n.d.).

8. Manik Chandra Vajpayee and Shridhar Pradkar, *Jyoti Jala Nij Pran Ki (Hindi)*, Suruchi Parkashan, New Delhi, 1999, p. 28.

9. Interview with Kashmiri Lal and also '*Punjab Mein Sangh Karya Ka Vistaar*'.

4. Jammu:- In this division there were six districts which included; Jammu, Mirpur, Srinagar, Udhampur, Reasi and Kathua.
5. Jalandhar:- It had four districts namely; Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur.
6. Amritsar:- It also had four districts namely; Sialkot, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Kangra.
7. Lahore:- This division comprised of Lahore City and the district of Lahore¹⁰.

In addition to these regions which according to the RSS's sphere of action comprised Punjab, other regions *i.e.* the area of modern Haryana though technically in Punjab but from the RSS view point it was under the Delhi unit of the RSS, also experienced growth of the RSS. The first *shakha* here was opened at Shahabad Markanda in 1937, by Ratiram, who during his studies at Delhi came under the influence of Vasant Rao Oke, the RSS *pracharak* of Delhi. Later on, Ram Parsad, the mentor of local D.A.V. School, became the focal point of growth of the *Sangh* in Haryana¹¹. But J & K province, technically a separate state, was under Punjab as far as the RSS working was concerned. According to the available information, in J & K the first *shakha* was organized by a young boy who belonged to Jammu region, but was studying at Lahore, in 1939. His name was Balraj Madhok, who later on rose to higher echelons of the RSS and then in the Bhartiya Jana Sangh. Though officially, the first *shakha* was started on June 5, 1940 when the *prant* pracharak Krishna and K.D.Joshi deputed Ravinder Verma for the purpose¹².

10. M.C. Vajpayee and S. Paradkar, op. cit., pp. 32, 33.

11. Rashtriya Sadhna, Lokhit Prakashan, Lucknow (n.d.), p. 130.

12. Ibid., p. 136.

Hindu Organizations: Facilitators and Impediments:

In the formative phase of the RSS history in Punjab, various socio-religious organizations had sweet and sour relationship with the *Sangh*. Its growth was simultaneously facilitated and inhibited by the presence of these organizations and their influence over the Hindu populace. At the moment of its establishment in Punjab the RSS was whole heartedly helped by the Punjab Arya Samaj. As it was mentioned earlier, that Parmanand, an Arya Samajist and the Hindu Mahasabha leader was instrumental in the setting up of favourable climate for the rooting of the *Sangh* in Punjab. It was him who along with the people of his ilk persuaded Hedgewar to start *Sangh's* work in Punjab. The main office (*karyalya*) of the RSS was located in the house of Dharamvir, again an Arya Samajist who also became the *prant karyavah*, at Lahore. Moreover, the meetings, *shakhas* and other miscellaneous activities of the *Sangh* were morally, materially and infrastructurally supported by the prominent Aryas of Punjab. The Arya Samaj temples served as the places of stay for the *swayamsevaks*, who came from other provinces and even to those workers who for the RSS's work moved intra Punjab. In other words, the Arya Samaj mandirs were the hub of the RSS activities initially. And there is no exaggeration in saying that the Arya Samaj had already created the ideological platform for the *Hindutva*. Therefore, the Punjabi Hindu nationalists acknowledged the hard work and labour put forth by the Arya Samaj and their other counterparts. So the ground for understanding the RSS's idea was properly laid among the educated Punjabi Hindus due to the laborious work of the Arya Samaj and its ilk.

The shift in the stance of the Arya leaders came when they failed to bring the *Sangh* followers in the influence of their puritanical religious ideology which revolved around the vedas,

yajanas, *sanghathan* and *shuddhi*. The RSS on its part believed in the spirit of *Hindutva* sans any religious complications, which precisely meant the absence of any overt religious symbols, rituals and rites. As a *swayamsevak* they hardly visited temples, chanted vedas religiously or for that matter indulged in any sort of scriptural devotional activity, though in their individual capacity, they might do the same. Moreover, many Aryas felt that the RSS people by bowing before the Saffron flag, reciting prayer in its glory were technically indulging in an idol worship, which was frowned upon in the Arya Samaj. Therefore, with the due course of time Arya Samaj dictated all its members to avoid the *Sangh* and therefore not to send their children to the *Sangh shakhas*. Similar was case with the Sanatanists, who too like their Arya counterparts assisted the RSS in the beginning and the Sanatan Dharam *Mandirs* even sheltered the RSS *pracharaks* (e.g. Balvir Sharma in Montgomery). But their orthodox way of worship, greetings and other religious activities prompted them to exclude the RSS people from their junta. Their chagrin regarding the RSS developed from their day to day activities for instance; the RSS way of greeting by saying *namaste* or *namaskar*, which according to the Sanatanists should be *ram-ram* or *jai ram ki*, further, their non observance of ritualistic *Hindutva* and so on. So they believed that these practices of the RSS were less or non-Santanist and therefore, must be shunned.¹³

In spite of these earlier handicaps the RSS stealthily carved a niche for itself in the Punjabi milieu. The opposition from the orthodox Hindu organizations notwithstanding, the RSS used its constructive work for strengthening itself in the Hindu society. The

13. Interview with Ram Singh, on October 5, 2006 Keshav Kunj, Jhandewalan, New Delhi.

Arya Samaj and the social work initiated by it in the fields of caste system, untouchability, the question of Brahmin-non Brahmin, women empowerment, education, opening of orphanages, *etc.*, facilitated the RSS agenda of consolidating and strengthening the Hindu society. As in the other regions of India the RSS here didn't face the acute social divisions in the Hindu society. In Punjab, the social and the religious orthodoxy was relatively less severe *vis-à-vis* other regions of India. So the harvest of the labours of the organizations like Arya Samaj was reaped by the RSS, which later on became the reason for its silent growth in those spheres of the society, which were hitherto inaccessible¹⁴ by its predecessors and that too without inviting much censure from the provincial governments.

The Strategy and Efforts of the RSS During the First Ten Years:

The RSS patriarch Hedgewar had a vision in mind regarding the spread, consolidation and the future course of action, of the RSS. He envisaged that in the rural areas about one percent of the populace should be moulded for making *swayamsevaks* and in the urban terrain the number should be three percent. Through this way the whole mission should progress and those chosen few (one and three percent) would further carry the flame of *Hindutva* across the nation. Precisely, the same strategy was adopted in Punjab also where the logistics were quite favourable to its growth. According to the biographer of Hedgewar, the progress of the *Sangh* in Punjab was phenomenal and the *Sangh shakhas* were swiftly cropping up in the districts of Rawalpindi, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot, Lahore, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Sunam, Hisar, etc. and maximum number of youngsters were attracted towards the *Sangh*.¹⁵

15. N.H. Palkar, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

An important feature of the RSS strategy for the indoctrination of its ideology and the *swayamsewak* making mission was the Officers Training Camp or OTC.¹⁶ Before delving deeper into the strategy and the spread of the RSS, here it would be prudent to examine and understand the details of the OTC. The first OTC was organized at Nagpur by Hedgewar during the summer vacations in 1927. The aim behind organizing this camp was to train the youngsters in such a way that they should become capable of starting the *Sangh* work at a new place. Furthermore, it was also desired that after taking the training the *swayamsevaks* should be able to work in the capacity of officers in the RSS hierarchy. The first OTC was held at *Mohit Ka Bada* and its programme during those times was scheduled from five to nine in the morning. In this first OTC, only seventeen selected *swayamsevaks* participated.¹⁷

The name OTC for these camps was used earlier when in Hindi these were called as *Adhikari Sikhsha Varga*. But after much deliberation the term 'Officer' was removed and these camps now a day were called *Sangh Shiksha Varga*, but still, the English acronym remained OTC. This change was made because of the consideration for the fact that in these camps there was nothing like officers and ranks, and the setup of the camp was on equalitarian grounds creating no distinction between the young and the old, high or low, rich or poor. All those who participated in these camps were treated on equal footing because all have joined the camp for the higher learning of *Sangh* syllabi (read ideology, physical and mental training). These

16. For details on the initial years of the OTCs at Nagpur see B.V. Deshpande and S.R. Ramaswamy, *Dr. Hedgewar: the Epoch Maker*, Bangalore Sahitya Sindu, 1981.

17. N.H. Palkar, p. 195.

observations regarding the OTC are based upon researcher's personal experience and also by interviewing those who had already attended the OTC.¹⁸

Now if we look at the curriculum of the OTCs we see that it spreads over a period of three years *i.e.* the camps were organized once a year for three years. This precisely means that those who want to do the full training have to attend all the three camps and further only those who had attended full OTC programme were considered for responsible positions in the RSS hierarchy. The first year and the second year which in the RSS jargon called as *pratham varsha* and *dwitiya varsha*, are organized in the respective states from where the participants hail. The third year or *tritiya varsha* training held only at Nagpur at the same place where the first OTC was organized. This place is called as *Doctor Hedgewar Smriti Mandir*. The training programme of the OTCs is based on the RSS ideology of considering the nation as a god and the service to this god is taken as worship. The *Sangh* believes that this whole curriculum is based upon the ancient Vedic tradition.¹⁹

The daily routine in the OTCs ranges from meetings, discussions, songs, story telling, *boudhiks*, *etc.* alongside with the physical training programmes. Earlier during the times of Hedgewar *boudhiks* used to take place thrice a week *i.e.* three days in a week were meant for this specific purpose and for that *swayamsevaks* used to assemble at the residence of Hedgewar.²⁰ The contents of the physical training programmes are divided into two categories. The

18. I was witnessed to OTC held at Amritsar in the summers of 2006.

19. *Shri Guruji Samagra*, Volume-4, Suruchi Parkashan, 2006, p. 289-90.

20. N.H. Palkar, p. 195

strenuous exercises and the games like *dangal, kushti, kabbadi, kho-kho, lathi* training, climbing and sometimes swimming,²¹ were meant for young *swayamsevaks (taruns)* and for the older ones the physical training mostly included *yoga, pranayam* and other mild exercises suited for their age. The main purpose of the physical training programmes is to make the *swayamsevaks* fit to take on any seen and unforeseen exigencies of everyday life and also to meet the expectations that the *Sangh* has from its *swayamsevak*. But the more important aspect of the OTC is the intellectual part of it, *i.e. boudhik*. It is the mental exercise which aims at bringing the intellectual propriety in the *swayamsevaks*. The *boudhik* help in elucidating the objectives of the *Sangh* and bring out clarity of aims for the purpose of which the volunteers have joined the RSS. The main issues and the topics which are deliberated in the *boudhik* sessions range from ephemeral ones to the eternal.²²

The brief outline of the above said topics amply demonstrate the content of *Sangh's* intellectual programme. Along with these discussions some questionnaires on the family issues and self appraisal were also given to the participants who aimed at judging the individual and familial aspects of the *swayamsevaks*. The third year OTC lasts for thirty days and during this time *swayamsevaks* have to observe strict regimen of daily routines, self-discipline and self-restraint. The most striking feature of these camps which is perhaps unmatched anywhere in world was the staying and eating

21. The swimming was an important part of the physical training during the times of Dr. Hedgewar and he even used wells to test the swimming skills of his *swayamsevaks*. But now a day not much attention is paid towards this aspect.

22. For details on the OTC held at Nagpur in 2005, please refer to appendix 1.

together of the teachers *i.e.* those who had come for physical and *boudhik* instructions, with the students *i.e.* participants who had come for the OTC. According to the RSS this was done in order to create an atmosphere of amity, oneness and identification to the common whole, besides maintaining a formal teacher student relationship. Even the instructors, the higher officials of the upper bracket of the *Sangh's* hierarchy stay with these *swayamsevaks* when they visit the OTC from time to time and many a times individually and informally meet the *swayamsevaks*.

This study of the OTC also reveals certain other aspects of the *Sangh* and one of them is the self-financing by the *swayamsevaks* who participate in the OTCs. All the expenditure which comes on travelling, boarding, lodging and eating is incurred by the *swayamsevaks*. Even the instructors and organizers of the OTC finance themselves. As all have to stay together for one month so the daily needs & services like bedding, uniforms, barber, cobbler, *etc.* are made available at subsidized rates. The *swayamsevaks* from all walks of the social life came for these camps *i.e.* students, teachers, farmers, doctors, shopkeepers, labourers, lawyers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and others from big cities, towns, villages, tribal areas, hilly areas *etc.* The boarding and lodging arrangement for the *swayamsevaks* was made at various schools and hostels earlier but later on a building was erected near *Smriti Mandir* for the same. All the participants (teachers, students and higher officials) dine together without any discrimination by sitting on the ground. A discernible development that takes place during the OTC is the feeling of mutual togetherness and union among the *swayamsevaks* hailing from different states who speak different languages. So during the OTC a bond develop among them which easily cross the language barrier and

pave the way for one India. In other words, for a month, whole India stays in a single hall.²³

The completion of OTC by a *swayamsevak* marked the beginning of a new phase of his life as *Sanghite*. The whole programme was instrumental in the development of the volunteer's personality and organizational skills. The OTC's had produced such volunteers who were once called *Dev-Durlabh* by the third *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS, Balasaheb Deoras.²⁴ This was true to a large extent because these *swayamsevaks* became cornerstones of the RSS work in the different parts of India, and Punjab was no exception. Golwalkar who was known for his constant and untiring visits of the country often paid his visits to these camps and used to stay there for four-five days.²⁵ Besides giving lectures, he was in the habit of interacting personally with the *swayamsevaks*. All this clearly shows the impact of the OTC and its overall importance in the life of the RSS and how indispensable it is for its man-making.

Now coming back on Punjab, the first OTC here was organized at Lahore in August 1938. Earlier, the OTCs were organized only at Nagpur and Pune, but due the rapid progress made by the RSS in Punjab, Lahore was chosen as its main base. This development was also suggestive of the fact that Punjab with just two to three years of the RSS presence became one of the focal points of the *Hindutva* activists. This also showed that the RSS was gaining strength in those parts of India where the Hindu-Muslim chemistry with each passing year was heading towards vicious alienation. The overall picture of

23. Shri Guruji Samagra, Volume-4, p. 290-91.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

Punjab and particularly that of Lahore seemed to be favourable for the growth of Hindu nationalism as later on we will see a respectable level of participation in the OTCs and in the *shakhas* of Punjab. In this camp Hedgewar was accompanied by Baba Saheb Apte and Golwalkar.²⁶

The participants in this OTC till then had only heard the name of Hedgewar. This was proved by the speech of *Bhai* Parmanand in which he said "... *unhe koi janta nahin tha*". (He was unknown to everyone)²⁷ The enthusiasm of the *swayamsevaks* of Punjab was equally responded by Hedgewar because he too was curious to see the progress made by the *Sangh* in the *Hindutva* dominated region by his eyes and also for encouraging of those *swayamsevaks* who were responsible for such progress and further enthusing them with more zeal. So on August 15, Hedgewar left for Punjab and on August 22, he reached Lahore with other RSS officials. His first address to the OTC was on August 23. The next day, Golwalkar delivered his lecture. On the fourth day of the camp another lecture of Hedgewar was scheduled but owing to his health issues he did not deliver that which later on was delivered by Golwalkar.

On August 27 Hedgewar was given a military salutation by the *Sangh* workers. His association with the Punjabi Hindu leaders and the close cooperation given by the Hindu organizations of Punjab to him was proved from the presence of Narendernath on this occasion and who in his lecture said,

"*Sangh-karya shighra hi prant bhar mein failna chahiye*".

[*Sangh* work should spread rapidly in the whole province].

26. Kashmiri Lal op. cit.

27. N.H. Palkar, op. cit., p. 387.

Hedgewar too delivered lecture on this occasion. Unfortunately, the records of this OTC were destroyed during the events on the eve of partition. After this programme inspite of keeping his ill health, Hedgewar visited Gokul Chand Narang and cordially invited him for the *Vijayadashmi* celebrations at Nagpur. Hedgewar had to address the gathering of the *Maharashtra Mandal* of Lahore on August 28, but due to his backache, the address was delivered by Golwalkar on the topic 'Mutual relation between the man and the society'. On the night of August 29 Hedgewar before leaving Lahore had a meeting with Narendernath regarding the *Hindutva* issues.²⁸

The 1938 OTC of Lahore was benchmark in the development of the *Sangh* in Punjab. According to the RSS documents, nearly 50 *swayamsevaks* from thirty different places of the province participated in this camp. The chief traniner (*mukhya shikshak*) of this camp was Vasant Rao Oke, the *prant pracharak* of New Delhi. The *swayamsevaks* were trained in the different fields of human activity *viz.* moral, social, political and religious discourses (*boudhiks*) lathi training (*dand shikhsa*), drill (parade) and different physical exercising (*sharirik shiksha*).²⁹ The second OTC in Punjab was held in August 1939 again at Lahore. In this camp 150 *swayamsevaks* participated. This OTC was also a success. Although, Hedgewar was unable to come this time so the whole responsibility was given to Golwalkar. He visited different places in Punjab and personally examined the *shakha* work there.³⁰ In the course of his tour he delivered three lectures (*boudhiks*) which highlighted the real orientation of the RSS in the

28. Ibid., pp. 389,390.

29. Kashmiri Lal op. cit.

30. For details of Golwalkar visit to Punjab during his tenure of 30 years, refer to Madan Lal Virmani, (ed.), *Shri Guruji: Punjab Mein*, Vishwa Samvad Kendra, Jalandhar, 2006.

years to come in India, in general and Punjab, in particular.

In 1942 another important OTC was organized but this was not in Punjab, it was held at Khandwa in Central Provinces. Nearly 400 *swayamsevaks* from Punjab participated in this camp. After the completion of training about 58 *swayamsevaks* were deputed as *pracharaks*. The RSS records mentioned that about 10 of them were M.A., 2 were doctors and 14 were shastri.³¹ Therefore, we can easily make out that those who decided to become *pracharaks* were of better quality *vis-à-vis* others. Apart from being dedicated to their set objectives and ideals of the *Sangh*, they had sound academic qualifications to back their efforts. Also it is significant to mention here that the RSS deemed it fit to highlight the education levels of their *swayamsevaks* and therefore, it wanted to be known as a group of educated. According to Anil Seal, it was not through secular politics but through the quasi-religious societies that educated Indian first fell into the habit of thinking and organizing on a national scale.³² But this phenomenon of educationally qualified men organizing themselves through these quasi religious organization was neither new and nor alien to Punjab. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Singh Sabha had many similarities. Anil Seal's discussion rested upon the fact that educated classes in the late 19th century were fast becoming the leader of the masses and through different agencies like language, they were forging the strong bonds of the nationality.³³ Although he asserts that sometimes zeal, some times caste solidarity encouraged the propensity towards the association but in the late 19th century

31. Rashtriya Sadhana, p. 144 and also according to the interview with Ram Singh.

32. Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Competition and Collaboration in the Late 19th Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 249.

33. Anil Seal, p. 247.

most of the associations in India were brought into being by the group of men united by the secular interests.³⁴ This assertion of Anil Seal was true to the extent of the common personal aspirations and resentment against the Raj. But with the paradigm shift coming in the communal relation in early 20th century, the associations of similar nationalistic (Hindu nation or Muslim nation) aspirations were directed more against the 'others' instead of the British Raj for secular nationalism.

So from this OTC some big names of the RSS echelons emerged and it is, therefore, important to make their reference here. First name was of Balraj Madhok (earlier an RSS *pracharak* and later on one of the topmost leader of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh), Ram Singh (*pracharak* of Amritsar, former head of Bhartiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti), Ganga Vishnu and many others.³⁵ The OTC of Khandwa was considered as an important one from Punjab's point of view. After this camp for the first time, the work of *Sangh* was organized by dividing the province into divisions and districts. All the important cities got their *pracharaks* and with the constant efforts the *Sangh* work filtered down to the villages.³⁶

Like OTC, there is another camp which is called as Physical Training Camp meant for the physical grooming of the *swayamsevaks*. There was an early a reference of this camp in the RSS records. This camp took place at Bilaspur, again in Madhya Pradesh or Central Provinces in the summers of 1945. Madhav Rao Muley led 400 *swayamsevaks* participated in this camp.³⁷ Apart from

34. Ibid., p. 194.

35. These personalities were personally interviewed by me on telephone.

36. M.L.Virmani, op. cit., p. 48.

37. Pandit Lekhraj, (ed.), Madhav Rao Muley, Part-I, Sahitya Bharti Parkashan, Jalandhar, (n.d.).

imparting physical prowess, these camps just like the OTCs, are organized by the RSS in order to develop and promote the feeling of mutual oneness among the *swayamsevaks* who gathered from different parts of the nation. Their doubts regarding various social, cultural, moral and religious issues are cleared in these camps. The strategic purpose of the RSS too gets fulfilled as these camps consolidate the training imparted in the daily *shakhas*. There is a firm belief among the RSS leadership that the inculcation of *samskars* (character building) in the *swayamsevaks* could be achieved only through the mode of rigorous practice which will finally lead to the ingraining of *samskars* and ultimately character.

The death of Hedgewar on June 21, 1940 marked the end of formative phase of the RSS in Punjab. Now the mantle fell on Guru Golwalkar who throughout his promising career as *sarsanghchalak* from 1940 to 1973 fulfilled it with élan. For the monthly death rites (*shradh*) of Hedgewar, two *swayamsevaks* of the RSS went to Nagpur from Punjab. They were Dharamvir and Harbans Lal. On this occasion Guru Golwalkar deputed four RSS workers from Nagpur to work in Punjab. They were Madhav Rao Muley, Babu Rao Paladhikar, Pandit Lekhraj and Baba Kalyani. The July of 1940 marked the beginning of a new phase of *Sangh's* development in Punjab with Madhav Rao Muley as their leader. He was made first *prant pracharak* of Punjab and his able workmanship lasted from 1940 to 1970's *i.e.* for about thirty long years.³⁸

Grassroot Work of the *Sangh* ; Examples of the *Swayamsevaks*:

Among the early *swayamsevaks* who were deputed in Punjab or from Punjab itself, had to start their work from scratch. Their mission started with acquainting, familiarizing and popularizing

38. Interview with Balvir Sharma at Jalandhar on February 28, 2006.

themselves with the local populace particularly the youth.³⁹ Raja Bhau Paturkar who after becoming the *pracharak* of Lahore in 1936-37, started his hunt from Punjab University Lahore, where he himself got admitted and gradually befriended with many young students. Lahore, at that time, was one of the largest cities of Northern India with total population exceeding eleven lakh and was distinctly ahead of many cities as the centre of learning. As is today, in those times too, the Indian Hockey team boasted of many Punjabi players. Being a good hockey player himself, Raja Bhau, acquainted with many budding college level hockey players. Earlier he used to organize *shakha* singularly because of the unfamiliarity and reluctance of the locals with this practice. But one small incident in the college at Lahore changed the overall perception. The incident according to RSS sources was the beating up of two bully Muslim youths with whom Rajabhau had a fracas at the college. This event changed the perception of the college teachers and the students alike, particularly the young boys took him as their leader and he in turn without missing this opportunity guided them to the *shakha* programme which they gladly followed.⁴⁰ The big thing which can be inferred from the above episode was the feeling of empowerment among the Hindu youths who, otherwise at times felt cowed down upon by the majority of Muslims.

The growth of RSS in other districts of Punjab too was on somewhat similar lines as was in Lahore. In Montgomery district, for example, some Hindu youths had formed a group called *Hindu Naujawan Dal* in 1938, which was their local reply to *Khaksar*

39. Ibid.

40. Rashtriya Sadhna, op. cit., p. 100.

movement of the Muslims. The two Hindu youths who were in the forefront of this organization were Ramjas and Balvir Sharma (still alive and living in Jalandhar). Balvir Sharma came under the influence of a swayamsewak from Lahore who subsequently introduced him to the RSS. Balvir Sharma later on participated in the OTC at Lahore, which lasted for forty days (now it is a thirty days camp). Importantly, he was perhaps the only one from Punjab who directly participated in the camp without any RSS background. His leaning towards the RSS became all the more strong when he saw himself fully attired in the *Sangh* uniform. Now it is interesting to observe the composition of the uniform. It consisted of khaki shirt, khaki short, strips, long black boots and flap on the pockets of the shirt, shoulder strips on which a badge citing RSS epithet was tagged in bronze metal and a belt around waist. All this was quite akin to the military uniform of the British. Moreover, the strict discipline, arms training, drill and commands too were very much on the British military lines. Therefore like Balvir Sharma, this training turned many other Hindu youths who were committed enough for the organization which promised them social, cultural, moral and physical strength as also instilling virtues of manliness and empowerment. They were predominantly influenced by the British Indian Police.⁴¹

The externalities of the RSS *viz.* quasi military training, use of salutations and commands, their uniform, according to its critics show its akinness to the Fascist and Nazi dictatorship of the yore. There has been a plethora of studies showing the origins, ideology, character and an end of these political philosophies in

41. Written account given by Balvir Sharma regarding his early days in RSS. Fortunately, he is the lone survivor in Punjab who had met Dr. Hedgewar.

Europe. Here I am examining some of the studies on these doctrines and comparing their conclusions with the ideology of the RSS. A latest writing on German Nazism by Richard J. Evans shows how Germany became police state under Nazis by the means of terror and intimidation. The German society under Nazis was society engaged in self surveillance.⁴² He further argued that in the *Third Reich* Nazi terror was not only used against the despised minorities, but over everyone even over the members of the Nazi party itself.⁴³ In applying the principles of racial hygiene (purity), the Nazis replaced the traditional Christian morality with the system of ethics that derived good and bad solely from the imagined collective interests of the German race.⁴⁴ This was their means of attaining 'Racial Utopia'.

Konard Heiden in his 'A History of National Socialism' traces the rise of National Socialism as an ideology in Germany and Hitler's advent to power. He explains how Hitler applied the National Socialism doctrine to control the economic, political, religious and social spheres of Germanic life. Almost every kind of political theory, from most reactionary monarchism to pure anarchy, from unrestricted individualism to the most personal and rigid socialism, finds representation in the Nazi party. The demand of Hitler was single and categorical – unconditional submission to his personal leadership.⁴⁵ The setting up of mighty mental and physical forces by the National Socialism was in the end turned inwards upon themselves and not against externals. This was its undoing.⁴⁶ Ralf Dahrendorf while

42. Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933–1939*. Allen Lane, Penguin Books, London, 2005, p. 114.

43. *Ibid.*, 117.

44. *Ibid.*, 515.

45. Konard Heiden, *A History of National Socialism* (translated from German), Anupama Publication, Delhi, 1987, p. XIV.

46. *Ibid.*, 359.

sociologically answering the rise of Nazi totalitarianism in Germany says that the Nazi hostility was directed against the tradition and only a society in which the traditional social ties of the people have been destroyed can be totalitarian.⁴⁷ That is why the connection between the middle ranking clerical workers and officials and totalitarianism especially in Germany is significant.⁴⁸

So the comparison between the Nazi and Fascist leadership with those of Hindu nationalists is bound to raise doubts and objections. The National Socialism was more mechanical than organicist, which was the hallmark of the RSS thought process. Further, the aversion for traditionalism separates the Nazis from the *Sanghites* who in another word focus their energies towards the revival of traditional Hindu structure. The RSS never tried to replace the Hindu religious philosophy with its concept of Hindu nation.

One of the cardinal reasons responsible for the rise of Fascism was the dilemma that capitalism was facing in Germany.⁴⁹ The contradictions of capitalism and resultant anarchy created by the communists in Germany and Italy were the primary reasons for the rise this ideology. Now again if we draw comparison of this *raison d'etre* for the rise of fascism with that of the *Hindutva* rise, we may end up with one similarity and that was the hate for the communism. The *Hindutva* rise owes very less to capitalistic phenomena at least in Punjab where Hindus were already in the driver's seat as far as economic prosperity was concerned. The possible reason of the RSS's

47. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. London, 1968, pp. 390,391.

48. Ibid.

49. Robert A. Brady, *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism*, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937, p. 12.

acceptability among the Hindus was their longing for assertion *vis-à-vis* Muslims. In their pursuit for manliness the RSS leadership drew more inspiration from the immediate sources *i.e.* the British police (their sense of discipline, parade, manliness and healthy bodies). The Brown Shirts of Hitler were no doubt inspired by the Fascist Black Shirts.⁵⁰ The Black and Brown Shirts were developed as Storm troopers (*Strumbteilung*) and were full fledged military units with lethal fire arms. The arms training in the RSS, on the contrary, was limited only to lathis or at the most swords as the license for a gun was hard found in those days. Their indulgence in the violence was true but on the local scale and that too during the period of increased communal antagonisms. But then this was the basic reason for the foundation of the RSS in 1925, when there was a need of a vigilante group to protect Hindu women during the Hindu religious fairs and festivals. The trained RSS *swayamsevaks* were also employed to protect the lives of Hindu nationalist leaders *e.g.* when Moonje received a threatening letter that his life would be ended on Id-ul-milad day. Hedgewar along with his bunch of *swayamsevaks* took care of those *goondas* (Muslims). Similarly, the RSS viewed that the Hindus at many other places were also subjected to frequent harassment and humiliation.⁵¹

So motive of the RSS is much less than state capture. The fascism in fact was political voluntarism in which the authority of the state reigned supreme. The fascist state's aspiration lies in its conquering of the political machinery in order to achieve the objective

50. F.L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism*, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1967, p. 131.

51. H.V. Sheshadri, *Dr. Hedgewar: The Epoch Maker*, Sahitya Sindhu Prakashan, Bangalore, 1981, p. 94.

of totalitarian state, the word frequently used by dictator Mussolini after his gaining control over the Italian political system, to describe his mode of governance.⁵² However, in Hitler's world view of totalitarianism, which was somewhat different from its Italian counterpart, totalitarianism was the system above the State, to say in Hannah Arendt's phrase. This was done precisely by Hitler in order to establish identification with its people and didn't mean that his Nazi movement was engineered to bring his party to power.⁵³ So the emphasis of Hitler's totalitarianism was on the contents of the State and not the State itself and the contents included the nation the people and else should be subordinated to its sovereign interests.⁵⁴

On the contrary, in the Hindu traditions as the RSS ideologue Golwalkar interprets it is characterized by harmony.⁵⁵ In contrast with Hitler, who wanted to solve his minority problem by eliminating the Jews by dissimilating its assimilated segment, Golwalkar's solution of India's minority problem issues was to assimilate the Muslims and Christians. What Golwalkar's ideology shares with the Nazism was low opinion for the State's authority, but inspite of race, to take whole society as the matrix of the Hindu nation. He wanted to create, through an agency of RSS, a homogeneous nation in which the social differences will loose their meaning. In his words, "The ultimate vision of our work is a perfectly organized 'State of Society' wherein each individual has to be moulded into a model of ideal Hindu manhood and made it into a living limb of

52. L.Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*, Praeger, New York, 1972, p. 13.

53. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1958, pp. 259-265.

54. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, (First Edition 1936), P.842

55. M.S.Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Jagrana Prakashan, Bangalore, 1980, p. 33.

the corporate personality of the society." ⁵⁶ The *Hindutva* propaganda of whichever stripe never failed to mention that Hindu India was the only country where Jews have been able to live in peace for thousands of years. ⁵⁷ This is a clear Hitlerian anti-thesis.

All the deliberations and references of what Moonje, Savarkar or Golwalkar ever said or wrote, unjustifies what Hindu nationalists did at the out break of Second World War. The widely criticised policy ⁵⁸ of the Hindu nationalists of being pro British was the call of Savarkar to join the British Indian army. This 'militarizing Hindudom' call of Savarkar was heeded by thousands of Hindu young men who fought against the very same Fascists on the battlefields of Dunkrik to Mayanmar from 1940 to 1945. So here the Fascism inspired *Hindutva* leaders rallied their cadres to fight against their own ideological mentors or brethren. This further shows the hollowness of *Hindutva*-Fascism nexus. Therefore the *Hindutva* movement could not be termed as a satelite of European dictators, though certain aspects of Golwalkar's ideology were reminiscent of certain traits of the German Nazism. The organicist concept is one of them but perhaps it may be due to the scientific education of Golwalkar as he was trained in natural sciences. ⁵⁹

The Hitler's movement was preoccupied with a need to capture a power with the aim of 'the creation of a Germanic State'. ⁶⁰ By contrast the RSS is not a putschist organization. Golwalkar while

56. Ibid., p. 88.

57. K. Elst, *The Saffron Swastika: The Notion of Hindu Fascism*, Vol-2, Voice of India, New Delhi, pp. 979-980.

58. For critical comments on pro British bias of the *Hindutva* leaders see Shamsul Islam, *Religious Dimension of Indian Nationalism*, A study of RSS, Media House Delhi, 2006, pp. 178-199.

59. Golwalkar studied and taught Zoology at Benaras Hindu Universtiy.

60. Adolf Hitler, op. cit., p. 387.

analyzing Hitler's motive said, "Hitler's movement centered on politics. We try to build life without being wedded to politics. It is many a time found that people are gathered for political purpose but when that purpose fails unity is lost. We do not want any temporary achievement but an abiding oneness. And so we have to keep ourselves aloof from politics".⁶¹ So the down playing of politics and state's authority signifies RSS chagrin for some of the Fascist and Nazist ideas. Like German Nazism and Italian Fascism, the RSS does not depend too much of its central leader but its grass root network of *shakhas* and cadres.

The RSS was but a milk and water militia. Marzia Casolari mentioned a letter written by a Hindu nationalist from Punjab to the Hindu Mahasabha leader B.S. Moonje, "We have at present in Punjab several *Dals* and *Sanghs* (...) There are *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, *Atma Sangh*, *Mahabir Dal*, *Seva Sangh*, *Akali Dal* working under different leaders. They have a sort of military organization. The *Akali Dal* is armed with swords, but the others have other weapons. The *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* has only lathies".⁶² The S.A. of the Hitler terrorized all political rivals off the streets, the RSS by contrast, at least in Punjab, except during partitions riots, never developed more muscle power than to face small groups of lightly armed Muslim mischief mongers and absolutely never approaching the capacity to face the state power. Even during the partition when the Hindus were preparing for the worst, the RSS distinguished itself from the other groups by its lack of armament.⁶³ Therefore, by drawing comparison

61. R. Kohli, *Political Ideas of M.S.Golwalkar*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1993, p. 138.

62. Marzia Casolari: "*Hindutva's* foreign tie-up in the 1930", *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 22, 2000, p. 226.

63. Interview with Satpal Kaka at Amritsar, November 22, 2004.

of *swayamsevaks* with the Storm Troopers of the *Third Reich* was like comparing the face of a Negro with that of European and establishing commonness by saying that both have two eyes, two ears, one nose and two lips, which is far from being true and factually incorrect. Moreover, the Indian public was told that the RSS's primary purpose was 'physical training meant for sinister motives', but the German public was certainly never told about the actual purpose of the Nazi party and its Brown Shirts, which was ostensibly political. So ours this little review of the supposed points of the similarity has actually yielded more points of difference.

Again coming back to the RSS in Punjab we see the forty days OTC turned Balvir Sharma into the RSS missionary and thereafter he was appointed as the *pracharak* at Akoda, tehsil in Montgomery district. This town was on the way from Lahore to Karachi. To start the *Sangh* work in that small town, according to Balvir Sharma, was no mean business as he was total stranger to that area. After searching for the accommodation which he ultimately got in the Sanatan Dharma temple (but only after being turned off from the Arya Samaj Temple earlier), he introduced himself to that town as a *Hindu Lathi Master* who trained Hindu youths in *lathi* and other weapons of self defence and offence. His hunt for recruitment of youths started from the local Arya High School where he introduced himself to the students and invited them for casual talks. Thus gradually, he was successful in recruiting nearly 21 students on the very first day. The influence was contiguous and within a month about six evening *shakhas* began to be held in Akoda.⁶⁴

There was another important facet of the grass root

64. Ibid.

shakha programme and that was setting up of *akhara*' (gymnasiums) in the cremation grounds (*shamshan ghats*).⁶⁵ Here youth were engaged in the vigorous physical exercises. But slowly these *akharas* were shifted from cremation grounds to the more decent areas like school and college grounds, which were hitherto out of bounds for these activities. After establishing the RSS in Akoda, Balvir Sharma was deputed to Pakpattan, another tehsil of Montgomery district. At this place the starting of shaka was not as simple as was in Akoda, though the conditions were quite similar. Here he didn't have accommodation either in the Arya Samaj or the Sanatan Dharam temples. For many days he had to spend his nights on the Pakpattan railway platform. Here too the RSS work started from the cremation ground, where youth used to do exercises. From Pakpattan, Balvir Sharma was appointed as the *pracharak* of Multan, where he worked with Lekhraj Sharma of Nagpur (who died four years back at Jalandhar).⁶⁶

The aforesaid description of the *swayamsevaks* was their real life experiences which were not the isolated cases as the similar stories were happening elsewhere in Punjab, which in more than one way says a lot about the establishment of *Sangh* in the distinct parts of region. There were many common features in the various episodes of the *Sangh's* development but the one which was most discernible was the full time dedication of the *pracharaks* who single mindedly dedicated themselves towards the aim for strengthening the Hindu nation through the agency of RSS. Though, it was not in tandem with

65. For an insightful discussion on *akharas* and their role in fomenting the communal riots see Shail Mayaram, 'Communal Violence in Jaipur', *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 13, 1993, p. 2529.

66. The whole episode and information therein is based upon the personal interview with Balvir Sharma February 28, 2006 at Jalandhar.

the nationalistic aspirations of the freedom fighters who were struggling for the termination of the British rule.

Contribution of Madhav Rao Muley :

The swift progress made by the RSS in Punjab after 1935-36 and more so after 1940, besides owing to other factors, could also be attributed to the contribution made by Madhav Rao Muley, the *prant pracharak* of Punjab from 1940-78. He was sent to Punjab by Golwalkar in 1940 for accelerating and consolidating the *Sangh's* work and was designated as the *prant pracharak*, who had to be responsible for all the *Sangh's* activities. By a careful look at his antecedents, we see that he was related to Golwalkar from his grandmother's side. He was born in a Marathi Brahmin family on November 7, 1912 at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. After coming in the contact of Hedgewar he under the influence of nationalistic thoughts came to Nagpur where he was thoroughly trained as a *swayamsevak* and got his first assignment to work in the Konkan area of Maharashtra. After some time, he relinquished this charge and proceeded to Punjab where he was deputed on the eve of monthly death rites of Hedgewar in July 1940.⁶⁷

The early days of M.R. Muley in Punjab were quite challenging as whole social, cultural, religious and political milieu was remarkably different from the one back home in Maharashtra. But soon, as the *swayamsevaks* were trained to be, he adapted himself to the new conditions. By establishing contacts with different sort of people and by visiting different places he developed an insight for judging the people. At that time the governmental atmosphere of Punjab was not congenial to the *Sangh's* ideology. But Madhav Rao treaded cautious path of not confronting the government and

67. Rashtra Sadhana, op. cit., pp. 185-186.

concentrated his attention towards the youth of Punjab by visiting students at different schools and colleges. He advised them to join *shakhas* and was fortunate enough to get ample response where some of these youth, for ever, dedicated themselves to the *Sangh's* work.⁶⁸ The toil of Madhav Rao soon paid off when Lahore surpassed many other cities of India except Nagpur, in the *Sangh's* progress, which obviously could not be by the virtue of its being the birth place of the organization.⁶⁹ It was much touted in those days that if you want to see the works of the *Sangh* then visit Lahore.⁷⁰ In the approaching times for the sake of organizational convenience Punjab was divided into eight divisions, which were further divided into the districts and saving four districts all other got their quota of *pracharaks*.⁷¹

M.R.Muley established his office at Lahore, which incidentally became the head office of the RSS in Punjab. It was a room given by Dharamvir in his house, but the accommodation was far from being an office, as the room was in dilapidated condition and the pre-requisites for an office were absent. There was no membership register, no account books, no typing machine, no duplicator *i.e.* from the view of an accepted meaning of the term it was anything but an office, for the sitting arrangement, there was a simple carpet (*duhree*) above which a bed sheet was spread.⁷² Among the RSS circles of Punjab this office was humorously called as 'Golden Palace', because of the yellow coloured walls which often imprint their colour on the clothes of those who unconsciously laid their backs on it.⁷³

68. Ibid.

69. N.H. Palkar, op. cit., p. 425.

70. *Rashtra Sadhna*, op. cit., p. 144.

71. Pathik Sandesh, Vijaya Dashmi edition, October 2002, p. 18.

72. Pandit Lekhraj, op. cit., p. 10.

73. *Rashtra Sadhana*, op. cit., p. 147.

The strategy adopted by M.R. Muley in Punjab could be summarized as intra-networking with the people and bodies of *Hindutva* ilk. He was of the firm opinion that only those people could understand the RSS who themselves were Hindu minded but not necessarily fundamentalists. There were various active Hindu (and Sikh) organizations in Punjab which included Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Hindu Mahasabha, (earlier Punjab Hindu Sabha), Singh Sabha, local gurudwaras, temples, *etc.* And he maintained his thorough contact with these people as he very well understood the worth of their support for an organization which was still in its infancy as far as Punjab was concerned. With these efforts Muley even succeeded in garnering support from the Namdhari Sikh community's head (mentor) *Sadguru* Partap Singh, who had his *gaddi* at Bhaini Sahib near Ludhiana. On similar lines, Madhav Rao approached one Kundan Lal of Ludhiana in 1941, who was the prominent Hindu Mahasabha leader of Punjab at that time.⁷⁴

Like elsewhere in India, the Punjab unit of the Hindu Mahasabha also tried to bring RSS into its fold and thereby manoeuvring to make use of its cadre as their voluntary unit. Kundan Lal, (whose name is mentioned above,) once questioned M.R.Muley about the relationship of the Mahasabha with the *Sangh*. Madhav Rao in reply said that inspite of many similarities there was a difference of ideology and in the ways which lead to the fulfillment of that ideology. He added that there were certain basic differences and one among those was the fundamentalist character of the Hindu Mahasabha. In spite of the *Hindutva* ideology of the RSS, its love for the Hindu

74. Ibid. p.186. Also see, Pandit Lekhraj, p. 27.

nation didn't perpetuate from the violent and strong means. He furthered that to bring out the love and reverence for *Hindutva*, Hindu culture and *Hindusthan*, was the only goal of the *Sangh*.⁷⁵

The argument given by Madhav Rao speaks about the basic differences between the two organizations and reasons why RSS kept aloof from the Hindu Mahasabha. It had also been suggested that there were some institutional and personal reasons which were responsible for the difference between them. But it was doubtless that the RSS in its initial years in Punjab got ideological, human and logistical support from the Hindu Mahasabha, but not without accepting the mutual differences. Madhav Rao emphasized the "man-making mission" of the RSS, and he believed that the Hindu Mahasabha was purely a political outfit. These efforts of Madhav Rao paid off when the Hindu Mahasabhite Kundan Lal accepted reluctance of Madhav Rao and ceased forcing him to work on the joint platform with the Mahasabha but without relinquishing his support to the RSS.⁷⁶

As a *prant pracharak* he had the duty of looking after the functioning of the *shakhas* in the various parts of Punjab. Here was a case of Multan *shakha* which was started in 1938, but its activities were largely limited to the young children. Even as late as 1942, there was hardly a *swayamsevak* above the age group of 20-22 years.⁷⁷ Madhav Rao personally took interest in this *shakha* and with his continuous efforts and conciliatory approach towards the ideologically and politically different groups and the people soon Multan *shakha* began to register the attendance of nearly 150-200 *swayamsevaks*. Madhav Rao in this district came into contact with the Congress

75. Ibid., pp. 30,31.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

leader, Lachhu Ram. In spite of being a staunch Congressite, he had developed a cordial relation with Madhav Rao. Like the Hindu Mahasbha leader, he too tried to persuade Madhav Rao to join the Congress and to work in tandem with it. But here also the same result followed. So we see that this was one positive aspect of the *Sangh* that in spite of the ideological antagonisms, the mutual understanding and tolerance for each other's views paid it rich dividends. It established its strong base among the diverse sections of Punjab's populace and subsequently garnered much needed support.⁷⁸

Efforts of Guru Golwalkar:

The role played by the higher leadership of the *Sangh* for its development in Punjab particularly that of M.S. Golwalkar requires cautious scrutiny. The second *sarsanghchalak* seconded the efforts of the local leadership with his periodic visits to Punjab and according to the RSS sources; in his thirty three year career as the *sarsangchalak* he visited Punjab approximately 45 times.⁷⁹ His first liaison with Punjab was established in July-August 1938, when he accompanied Hedgewar for the OTC at Lahore. But soon his interests coincided following the year due to the illness of Hedgewar; Golwalkar was designated as his representative to the Lahore OTC (1939). During his sojourn, Golwalkar cemented the efforts of the local *pracharaks* in developing the base of the RSS. In 1939, at the OTC in Lahore he delivered three discourses (boudhiks) in which he asked the *swayamsevaks* to concentrate upon the basic aspects of the *Sangh's* ideology *viz.* organization (*sangathan*), to learn the art of organizational skills from the life example of Hedgewar and the nation which was a cultural unit. During the course of his discourses he

78. Ibid., pp. 33, 34.

79. Madan Lal Virmani, op. cit., p. 66, 67.

stressed upon the "need for preserving the Hindu culture which has been endangered by the continuous influence of the foreign religious elements who are bent upon eliciting all the positive benefits from this country at the cost of native people (...)"

[Yahah kuch anya pardharmi bhi samaj mein aa basey hain, lekin yahan ke mool samaj ke saath atamsat na hote huye apna alag astitva banaye huye hain. Iske piche unka uddeshya adhikam labh prapt karna hai (...)].

Regarding Hedgewar he said, "(...) some people feel ashamed of calling themselves Hindu and therefore, they think RSS as their enemy, but even they have respect for Hedgewar, because they know that this man is something different, his staunchest opponent loves him (...)"

[Kai log yeh sweekar karne mein lajja anubhav karte hain ki veh Hindu hain aur isi karan rashtriya swayamsevak sangh ko apna shatru samjhate hain, parantu veh Dr. Hedgewar ji ke prati shraddha rakhte hain. Veh jante hain ki yeh vyakati kuch aur hi hai. kattar se kattar virodhi bhi unhe prem karta hai (...)]

He further said, "Dr. Hedgewar is not a person but a feeling".

[Dr. Hedgewar vyakati nahin hai, ek bhav hain]

His views on the nation could be gauged when he said, "Nation is a cultural entity. When historical, religious and cultural traditions of a country are singular, then it is called as a nation".

[Rashtra ek sanskritik ikai hai. Jab kisi janasamuh ki etihasic, dharmik, sanskritik paramparain ek hon, tab veh rashtra kehlata hai].

For achieving organization of the Hindu society he said, "For the organization of the whole Hindu society many stations will come in the path (...). Similarly, independence too is a station on the way, the end is unbridled organization of the whole Hindu society, this

is last stage and with the reaching of this stage many problems will subside themselves ".

[*Sampurn Hindu Samaj ko sangathit karne ke apne uddeshye tak phounchte samay marg me kai station milenge (...). Vaise hi svadhinta prapti bhi beech ka ek station hai. Asetu himachal sampurn Hindu samaj ki susangatith stithi, yeh antim stithi hai. Is stithi par phounchne ke purav hi apni kai samasyain sulaj jayengi*] ⁸⁰

For achieving the organization he said, "The means for organization are the daily running *Sangh shakhas* and it is our duty to bring more and more Hindus in it and therefore reinforcing the feeling of unity and organization in them".

[*Apne sanghthan ka madhym hai dinedin chalne vali Sangh shaka. Hamara kam hi ki adhik se adhik sankhya mein Hinduon ko pratidin usme upasthith karein aur unme sanghthan ka bhav bharein*] ⁸¹

In the January of 1941 M.S. Golwalkar for the third time visited Punjab but this time as the *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS. While addressing a group of prominent *swyamsevaks* of Punjab at Jalandhar on January 9, he said that when RSS talked of *Hindutva* and *Hindu sangathan* it should not be considered as an enemy. He further added, "In the census of 1941, a group of Hindus are considered as tribals by the government. Government also considers Jains as separate. But what the government wants should not be bothering us. Buddhist, Jainis and Sikhs, all of them are Hindus".

[*1941 ki janganana mein Hinduon ke ek samuh ko sarkar ne adivasi*

80. Ibid., p. 13. Also see *Shri Guru ji Samagra*, Volume-8.

81. M.L.Virmani, op. cit., p. 14.

*kaha hai. Sarkar jainion ka bhi alag ullekh karti hai, kintu sarkar kya chahti hai, iski chinta karne ka hame koi karan nahin. Buddh, Jain, Sikh sab Hindu hi hain]*⁸²

For making *swayamsevaks* he said, "Our brethren living in the villages might be illiterate and they may not know writing and reading, but they are well cultured and therefore, they can become good *swayamsevaks*".

*[Gavon main rehne wale humare bandhu anpadh honge, shayad unhe padhna likhna na aata ho, kintu veh susanskrit hain, veh Sangh ke achche swayamsevak ban sakte hain]*⁸³

For inculcating the feeling of brotherhood he reiterated, "To create the feeling of brotherhood in the Hindu society is an important task of the *Sangh* and by gathering together with an open heart, talking and dining-drinking with each other constructs the feeling of brotherhood".

*[Apne Hindu samaj mein bhratrabhav paida karna hi ek mahatavpurn kam hai aur ekatrit aakar khule hirdya se bat-cheet ya khana-pina jaise samanya vyavhar se veh bhratrabhav ka nirman hota hai]*⁸⁴

According to him, the practice of gathering everyday had three aspects.

1. Basic idea - Forging of brother hood.
[Mool vichar - Bharatrabhav ka nirman karna]
2. Belief - Can be generated by gathering together openly.
[Vishwas - Pratyaksh ekatrit hone se veh nirman hoga]

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., p. 82.

3. Direct work - To come to the *shakha* collectively every day.

[*Pratyaksh Karya - Apni shakha mein har roz niyimit roop se ekatrit aana*].

On religious conversions he said, "Our society did not get fragmented due to the religious conversions. We were already fragmented and therefore, the aggressive religious missionaries converted our brethren (...)"

[*Dharam parivartan ke karan apna samaj asangathith nahin hua. Hum asangathith the isiliye akarmak dharam anuyae yahan apne bandhuon ka dharam parivartan kar sake*].⁸⁵

Therefore, he viewed that they should not only build themselves physically strong but more important was to become mentally and culturally strong.

At Lahore on January 16 1941, Golwalkar delivered *boudhik* to the *swayamsevaks*. In this *boudhik* he gave the example of one Datta Naik, who was the then *sanghchalak* of Bombay and died in the same year. Golwalkar revealed the qualities of a *swayamsevak* by quoting Data Naik several times during his discourse. He said that at the time of his funeral procession (*shavyatra*) 2000 *swayamsevaks* participated and it was strange that a lowly and simple looking man garnered so many people at the time of his death; this speaks volumes for his popularity. Therefore, he told Lahore *swayamsevaks* that they should follow the work and efforts of Data Naik and try to do the same in Lahore. He stressed upon the need of making the RSS omnipresent in all walks of the national life. "One hour devoted daily to the *Sangh Shakha* is not the work done by a *swayamsevak*, it is merely a participation in its programme. The work and the duty has to be

85. Ibid., p. 15.

performed in the remaining twenty three hours in the similar vein as we do for our family, by considering whole Hindu nation as one's family", he said.⁸⁶

In 1943, Golwalkar visited Punjab again and stayed here from October 22 to November 12. On November 13, he called upon and addressed the meeting of the *pracharaks* from Punjab province.⁸⁷ In this meeting the discussion was primarily focussed on the working of the *Sangh* in Punjab and means through which it could be accelerated. The attitude of the British Government and the Punjab Government was also considered. In November 1946, Golwalkar visited Multan, Montgomery and Lahore and some other districts of Punjab. At Multan, he had *rendezvous* with the district *sanghchalak*, Baldev Varman. In this meeting they delved upon the sight of impending partition. Baldev Varman questioned, "There is much noise regarding Pakistan. Whether it will be carved out? [*Pakistan ka bahut shor hai. Kahin veh banaya to nahin jayega?*]

Golwalkar's reply was, "I have a full faith in Mahatma Gandhi. He will never accept the proposal of Pakistan. It may be possible that in order to save the country from partition, he may accept some proposals of Jinnah regarding appeasement of the Muslims, but will never let the country partitioned".

[*Mujhe Mahatama Gandhi par vishwas hai. Veh Pakistan ka prastav kabhi nahin manege. Ho sakta hai desh ko avibhajit rakhne ke liye Jinnah dwara prastut kai prastav musalmanon ke tushtikaran ke liye shyad mann bhi le. Par desh vibhajan veh nahin hone denge*]⁸⁸

86. Ibid., pp. 14-16.

87. Ibid., p. 66.

88. Interview of Lekhraj Sharma recorded by Madan Lal Virmani, op. cit., p. 18.

The periodic tours of Golwalkar to Punjab signified the importance of this province in the RSS scheme of things. The central leadership was very particular and meticulous about their progression in Punjab. Golwalkar's concern for Punjab became more explicit after Hedgewar's death and his assumption of *sarsanghchalakship* because it was his duty now to nurture the juvenile *Sangh* started by his mentor as in the succeeding chapters and in the later part of this one we will see the increasing vigil of the government on this organization.

Apart from his visits Golwalkar was constantly corresponding with the local leadership of the *Sangh*. According to the RSS records, the first letter that Guru Golwalkar wrote in connection with this was during the OTC at Lahore. This letter was written on August 31, 1938, to Abaji Hedgewar of Nagpur. Unfortunately, as in the case of other sources, the original text of this letter which was written in Marathi was destroyed during the mayhem of 1947. In this letter Golwalkar eulogized the efforts of Dr. Hedgewar for the *Hindu rashtra*. There was a mention of Dr. Gokal Chand Narang whom Dr. Hedgewar had invited for *Vijayadashmi* at Nagpur and further it was hoped by him that with the active cooperation of these *Hindutva* loving people, sooner than later, Punjab would become the bastion of the *Sangh*. Finally, the most important content of the letter was the fulfillment of the dream of unfurling the Saffron flag (*Bhagwa Dhwaja*) across Attock.⁸⁹ Now this letter amply demonstrated that as in the case of earlier empire builders right from ancient times (Maurayas) to the British, the strategic and demographic importance that Punjab

89. Shri Guruji Samagra, op. cit., Volume-8, p. 5.

commands was never in question and therefore, same was true for the RSS also.

The above mentioned correspondence of Golwalkar was from Punjab to Nagpur and at the time when he was not at the helm of the affairs. His actual consideration about Punjab could be understood clearly when during the illness of Hedgewar the work of corresponding with the *pracharaks* and the *swayamsevaks* fell on Golwalkar. His first letter from Nagpur to Punjab was addressed to Dharamvir of Lahore dated on December 6, 1939. In this letter Guru Golwalkar said, "(...) our view point regarding the propagation of our work should be clear and there should not be any doubt about it. For promoting our work we should refrain ourselves from using the agency of newspapers and pamphlets (...) please send the monthly details of the work of all the *shakhas* of Punjab to the head office".⁹⁰

In another letter which was addressed to the Lahore *pracharak* Rajabhau Paturkar on April 24, 1940, Golwalkar wrote "(...) in the changed circumstances our work is progressing rapidly which means that our work is not dependent totally upon any particular programme. Our work and its methodology has so much internal force that it will find its way in every type situation and will be a success (...)".⁹¹

In an another letter to the editor of *Dainik Prabhat*, a daily published from Amritsar, dated on January 21, 1941, Golwalkar stated, "(...) I feel satisfied with your special edition on the birth anniversary of eternal *Shri Guru* Gobind Singhji. (...) *Guru* Gobind Singhji encompassed the virtues of a saint, patriot, an organizer and a leader.

90. M.L. Virmani, op. cit., p. 33.

91. Shri Guruji Samghra, op. cit., p. 7.

His ideal life is inspirations for the dormant Hindu society (...), pay my deep regards to Master Tara Singhji, the mentor of this paper (...)." ⁹²

In one informal letter that he had written to one *swayamsevak* Kewal Krishan of Lahore dated on October 14, 1943, he wrote "(...) before my reaching at Nagpur your marriage might have been solemnized at Kanpur (...) your apprehension regarding disembarking from the *Sangh's* work by indulging in the pleasures of the new life should not disturb you. As you have already strengthened your will power, therefore you will always be careful and will not distract (...) you will perform your work more enthusiastically." ⁹³

Guru Golwalkar's correspondence with the RSS leadership in Punjab revealed several facets of the personality of the *sarsanghchalak* and his utmost concern about the *Sangh* and the people attached to it. As we have seen, this correspondence sometime related to the work and progress of the *Sangh* directly and sometimes dealt with the interpersonal relations, which Golwalkar shared with the *swayamsevaks*. The contexts of correspondence therefore, varied depending upon the times and the circumstances. There was constant endeavour on the part of central leadership to expand and consolidate the *Sangh* by strengthening and organizing the Hindu masses (Sikhs included) for any possible eventuality. During all his addresses to the *swayamsevaks* and his correspondences with them, it is quite vivid that the importance which Punjab commanded was next only to Maharashtra. Moreover, there was constant effort on the part of Golwalkar to establish cordial relations with his counterparts in Punjab

92. M.L. Virmani, op. cit., p. 33.

93. Shri Guruji Samagra, op. cit., p. 26.

as also with the inter-communal groups (Sikhs) whom he always considered an integral part of the concept Hindu. He had developed personal affiliation with the host of *swyamsevaks* which in coming times helped rooting the RSS deep into the Hindu masses of Punjab.

The RSS in general and Golwalkar in particular from the very beginning in Punjab was keen to assimilate different communities of the broad Hindu society which according to their logic included Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Tribals and the caste Hindus. The most important section of the society in Punjab were the Sikhs. Notwithstanding the RSS claim, they always emphasized their separate identity distinct from the majority Hindus. Yet RSS sailing on the plank of *Hindutva* and *Hindu rashtra* always considered them as one amongst them. This was amply proved by the letter of Golwalkar to the editor of *Dainik Prabhat*, wherein he eulogized Guru Gobind Singh and called him an ideal inspiration for the sleeping Hindu society. Further, by paying regards to Master Tara Singh he demonstrated that even Sikh leadership was sympathetic to the RSS cause. The cordiality in the relations of the two was further demonstrated when during the partition imbroglio the RSS and the Sikh *jathas* jointly adopted offensive and defensive posture against the antagonistic Muslim organizations. Also during the formation of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964 in Bombay at Sandeepani Ashram, Master Tara Singh was the special invitee and one of the founder members of the VHP.⁹⁴ These exercises by the RSS suggested that in order to achieve the cherished aim of *sanghathan* of the *Hindu rashtra* it was too willing to take along the different cross-section of the Hindu society, even if at times these groups had conflicting relationship *vis-à-vis*

94. Christophe Jafferlot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to 1990s*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 1996, p. 198.

RSS and its idea. Putting this relationship in the contemporary perspective, we can safely assume that the political accommodation that existed between the Akalis and the Bhartiya Jana Sangh and now with its modern avtar BJP is not by default but had a precedent in the near past. We will be delving upon these aspects in the later part of this chapter when we will see how the RSS and the Sikh jathas indulged in rioting against the Muslim League's National Guard. Further, twists in their relations at the time of partition, the Punjabi *Suba* movement and terrorism will be dealt in the succeeding chapters.

Balancesheet of the RSS till 1946:

As already mentioned, the Punjab unit of the RSS also included Jammu region. For the sake of better understanding we will also be looking at some important names of the Haryana region though the emphasis of the narrative will be upon the core region *i.e.* Punjab. From the Haryana region Lahore OTC was attended by two people namely, Vaid Ratiram and Hansraj (which are still alive till the writing of this text). Here also two *swayamsevaks* from Nagpur were deputed as the *pracharaks*, namely Anuji Ganesha Kudankar and Govind Sukhdev. These two could be regarded as the first two *pracharaks* of Haryana.⁹⁵ The regional headquarter of the *Sangh* here was established at Rohtak in 1942 and it was inaugurated by Golwalkar. But during the partition this office was destroyed.⁹⁶

The growth of *Sangh* in Jammu and Kashmir was in tandem with Haryana. The local *pracharak* worked according to the diktats of the Punjab RSS. Here, a native Jammuite Jagdish Abrol was appointed as the *pracharak*. In 1941 when Guru Golwalkar visited

95 Rashtriya Sadhana, op. cit., p. 130.

96. Ibid., p.131.

Jammu for the first time he designated *Pandit* Premnath Dogra as the *sanghchalak* of J&K and by that time in the Jammu city seven morning and seven evening *shakhas* were working.⁹⁷ By 1943, Jammu had become an influential centre of the RSS and the daily attendance in the *shakhas* touched the figure of two thousand. Now from here the *pracharaks* were disseminated to other parts of the region. Their efforts materialised when the *shakhas* registered their presence in the towns of Jammu region. Important among these were Bhadarwah, Rajouri, Poonch, Doda, Mirpur, Kotli, Muzzafrabad, Udhampur, *etc.* and also in the villages. In the Kashmir valley, first *shakha* was opened in 1944 and slowly the work expanded to the peripheral areas of the region. Golwalkar visited Jammu and Kashmir in the year 1946 and during his sojourn to Srinagar he addressed a strong gathering of one thousand fully uniformed *swayamsevaks* and other prominent personalities of the region. Golwalkar's visit strengthened the RSS in the valley and the year 1946 was the year of rapid progress for the *Sangh*. Many young Kashmiris began to move out as *pracharaks* thereby admitting many important people from the different regions in the *Sangh* fold. Passing through the boundaries of Srinagar, the RSS established its *shakhas* in the peripheral regions of the valley *viz.* Baramulla, Pahalgam, Uri, Anantnag and Muzzafrabad.⁹⁸

In Punjab's case, Lahore was the biggest hub of the RSS. The abuzzing *shakha* programme which was started by Paturkar was steadily gaining momentum. Going by the RSS records, the average count of the *swayamsevaks* in the morning and the evening *shakhas* of Lahore was around 70-80. The case of the other cities too was not

97. Rashtriya Sadhana, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

much different. The *shakhas* with the daily attendance below 50 were very few and could be counted on the fingertips. They were considered as unhealthy *shakhas* and therefore, every effort was made by the leadership to bring them at par with stronger ones.⁹⁹ The prominent *pracharaks* who came out of the Lahore OTC of 1942, apart from the four names mentioned earlier were Chaman Lal (Mandi *pracharak*), Sitaram (Kullu tehsil *parchark*) Kasturi Lal (Palampur tehsil *pracharak*) Bhaskar (Bhavana city *pracharak*), and Janardhan Pratihast (Dharamsala city *pracharak*).¹⁰⁰ Similarly from Sialkot, where the work was started by K.D.Joshi, Rajpal Puri and Chaman Lal became the *pracharaks* of Sindh in 1942.¹⁰¹ After the departure of K.D.Joshi from Sialkot, the work was continued by Vasant Rao Agarkar who came from Nagpur in 1943 and later on became the *pracharak* of Rawalpinidi.¹⁰²

The rapid stride made by the RSS in the region was alluring the Hindu society towards it. In 1945-46, 52 *paracharaks* were sent out from Amritsar *shakhas* to the different regions of Punjab. The discernible aspect was the presence of four doctors among them. According to the RSS records, Amritsar Division (Division according to the *Sangh* work was comprised of four districts 30 tehsils, 10 cities, 50 towns and 11820 villages) had full quota of the *pracharaks*. The name of some *pracharaks* which is worth mentioning here were - Ishwar Das Mahajan (Sialkot district *pracharak*), Sundardas Valiar (Kangra district *parcharak*) and along with him eight more *pracharaks* were sent to this district to work at

99. Interview with Thakur Ram Singh.

100. Manik Chandra Vajpayee and Shridhar Pradkar, op. cit., p. 34.

101. *Rashtriya Sadhana*, op. cit., p. 144.

102. Manik Chandra Vajpayee and Shridhar Pradkar, op. cit., p. 34.

various levels, Kasturi Lal (Mandi district *pracharak*) with him three other *pracharaks* were sent to this district, Devendra Nath Verma (Nadaun district) and with him four other *pracharaks* were sent to different tehsils of this district.¹⁰³ In 1946-47 the work of Amritsar district was reposed on Balramji Das Tandon (the B.J.P. leader and former M.P. from Amritsar) and with him two more *pracharaks* were sent. The work of Gurdaspur district was given to Vishwanath (died recently on May 23, 2007 after prolonged illness) and along with him seventeen other *pracharaks* were sent. Therefore, accordingly the approximate figure that comes out was of 46 *pracharaks* in the Amritsar division.¹⁰⁴ Apart from expanding in the different districts of Amritsar, the RSS consolidated itself in the city of Amritsar also. The earlier figure of 70-80 *swayamsevaks* in the *shakhas* now touched 90. The maximum figure was recorded at the Hindu Sabha College in Amritsar was 120 in the evening *shakha*.¹⁰⁵ And before the partition the daily attendance in total 150 *shakhas* of the city was staggering 2500.¹⁰⁶ The above mentioned figures vividly show the deep rooted presence of the RSS in the psyche of Punjabi Hindu. The continually soaring figures of the membership showed that the vulnerable community was desperately looking for some kind of succour to empower them.

Punjab : Period of Strife and Mounting Distrust:

The period from 1936 to 1946 was marked by the growing alienation among the principal communities of Punjab. With each passing year the communal situation was turning for worse.

103. Interview with Vishwanath at Amritsar, September 2006.

104. Interview with Thakur Ram Singh.

105. M.L. Virmani, op. cit., p. 48.

106. Rashtriya Sadhana. op. cit., p.144.

There were several causes which were responsible for the growing estrangement between the Muslims and the Hindu-Sikhs. These causes ranged from the economic to the political to the religious ones. The economy of Punjab was divided along the communal lines where the Muslims generally speaking were the peasants, while the Sikhs and the Hindus had more urban vocations. Thus, while the majority of the Muslims were peasants, most of moneylenders were Hindus or the Sikhs, which fuelled communal animosity.¹⁰⁷ Politically speaking, communal representation and reservation to the Muslims created bitterness. The religious issues too had taken their toll. The Arya Samaj was the pioneer in this regard and *suddhi*, *sanghathan*, cow protection, conversions were the rallying issues. The sight of upcoming independence had awakened various social and political outfits to hasten their respective agendas *i.e.* to get most out of the situation. The political atmosphere of the cities and the towns was so charged, that everyone had its affiliation with one or the other outfit. So the different organizations were making the hay while the communal sun was shining. The most important of these outfits were; Khaksars, Ahrars, Muslim League National Guard, Akali Dal, Dal Khalsa, anonymous Sikh *jathas*, Hindu Mahasabha, Congress, Communists, Arya Vir Dal, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh *etc.* Among these organizations it was only the RSS that was working on its own without any political support except occasional help from the Hindu Mahasabha but was chagrined by the other outfits.¹⁰⁸ The question of Hindu-Muslim was therefore slowly shadowing the psyche of the common populace.

107. Anders Bjorn Hansen, *Partition and Genocide*, India Research Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 7, 8.

108. Interview with Satpal Kaka.

Among the Hindus and the Sikhs of Punjab a constant phobia was gripping and that was due to the fact that in case of any possible eventuality the Muslims might outnumber them. This feeling was turning nightmarish when the rumours of the partition became order of the day. The Muslim League's volunteer group National Guard and some other Muslim outfits were becoming more and more belligerent in the areas of the West Pakistan. The RSS which was already entrenched among the Punjabi Hindus by this time was ready to encash the situation which demanded the bold steps on the part of the Hindus (Sikhs included). According to the RSS sources, the contemporary view of the Punjabi Muslims regarding Hindus was that of 'Pulse grinding Bania' [*Moong ki dal pisne wala bania*] and a soft *Gulab Jamun* (a sweet) that melts in the month.¹⁰⁹ Well, this Muslim view of the Hindus was even acknowledged by Mahatma Gandhi when he said about the meekness and natural cowardice of the Hindus the 'bullying nature' of the Muslims and the need to overcome these.¹¹⁰ In other words the Hindu-Muslim antagonism was not limited only to the Hindu nationalists but also present in the nationalist and the colonial discourse. This needed an immediate correction, which was possible only by strengthening the Hindus physically and morally. And by the virtue of its strong presence in almost every town and city of Punjab, from Khyber to Ambala, coupled with intranetworking, *Sangh* rose to the occasion.

The deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations had its antecedents in the past. But the introduction of the provincial self government and the extension of the franchise in 1937 could be called

109. Ibid.

110. M.K.Gandhi, 'Hindu-Muslim Tensions its Causes and Cure' in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Volume-24, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1967, p. 142.*

as the breaking point. There was an outbreak of inter and intra community clashes from 1937-1939, wherein the frequency of former was greater. These clashes were generally rallied around religious customs and offences like cow slaughter, prayer calls and procession routes. The intra communal clashes were mostly connected with the political disagreements as between the Hindu Nationalists and the Hindu Congressmen or between pro-Congress and anti-Congress Muslims.¹¹¹ However, the inter communal violence was not merely limited to the disagreements regarding religious symbols, routes, processions but was also concerned with the politics *i.e.* representations in the municipal services.¹¹² The Hindu nationalists were also sometimes up in arms against the Congress as was proved from the clash between the Hindu nationalist and the Congress supporters in Amritsar where former was fatally injured.¹¹³ The involvement of the RSS in this clash though was not established because at that time they had no political stakes except for supporting the Mahasabha on certain occasions (The members of the RSS had affiliations with the Congress party also). In January 1940 it was reported that the disagreement between the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs concerning their representation in the municipal services and procession routes continued to cause tension among them.¹¹⁴ Therefore, not only communal issues but the political ones also were cause of the clashes.

Jinnah's Lahore Resolution which was better called as the Pakistan Resolution on March 22, 1940, produced fear and mistrust

111. Anders Bjorn Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

113. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, footnote 67, p. 32.

114. *Fortnightly Report* first fortnight of January 1940, p. 280.

among the Sikhs and the Hindu and paved the way for strengthening of the volunteer corps.¹¹⁵ The RSS though still in its formative years was quick to respond by enlisting more and more volunteers. There was considerable surge in its activities. Similar was the case with the Sikh militia, which was organized on quasi-military footing. These developments were furthered by the proclamations made by several Congressmen who were saying that the people shouldn't look to the government agencies for protection in the times of emergency, but instead band themselves into volunteer brigades under the Congress direction.¹¹⁶

An important characteristic of the volunteer organizations, which were active during that time, was symbolic and predatory relationship among them. The Hindus were especially anxious because of the growing agitations by the Khaksars (*Belcha* party in local Punjabi parlance), while the Muslims on the other hand were equally afraid of the preparations made by the Sikhs to resist the Khaksar or any other Muslim organization.¹¹⁷ The Khaksars and the National Guards provided constant fuel to the RSS for strengthening and recruiting more and more volunteers. Therefore, it was not astonishing when the RSS sources say, "The *Sangh's* presence was more in those areas where the activities of the Muslim volunteer corps were vigorous and the population of Hindus and Sikhs scarce".¹¹⁸ It was mentioned in the *fortnightly report* of the second half of June 1941 that the Hindus were moving closer to the Sikhs for mutual help against the potential Muslim aggression.¹¹⁹

115. Anders Bjorn Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

116. *Fortnightly Report*, first fortnight of April 1942, p. 95.

117. *Fortnightly Report*, first fortnight of June 1940, p. 149.

118. Interview with Satpal Kaka,

119. *Fortnightly Report*, second fortnight of June 1941, p. 77.

As the reality called Pakistan was approaching closer, the RSS and the Sikh *jathas* too were coming closer to each other and at times were sharing each other's logistics.¹²⁰ They were united up against the move of the Muslim League. Although, the RSS and the Sikh bodies had operated in Punjab before the Second World War, but their activities became more pronounced only after the reorganization of the Muslim League Volunteer Group in 1944 when its activities were turning more and more audacious and instigating.¹²¹ The recruits of the volunteer groups were participating in the communal clashes with each other, which were evident when on July 4, 1944, a group of 15 Hindu youth attacked four Muslim butchers. According to the government reports two of these youth were members of the RSS.¹²² The membership register of the RSS was constantly ticking. According to the estimates of the British government, the membership of RSS stood at 28000 in 1946.¹²³ But the actual figures were quite high as compared to the governmental estimates and its expectations. The reason was the underground activities of the RSS and unlike other voluntary organizations the RSS didn't publicize its activities besides instructing its cadres to beware of the CID.¹²⁴ The physical training (*sharirik*) and other exercises which were already under way in the *shakhas* were attracting both Hindu and the Sikh youth. The physical training of the *Sangh*, therefore, was the indicator of its preparations for the day of reckoning. This was also the case with the National Guards and the government reported that both were preparing for the war with each other.¹²⁵

120. Interview with Satpal Kaka.

121. *Fortnightly Report*, first fortnight of July 1944, p. 61.

122. Anders Bjorn Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

123. *Fortnightly Report*, first fortnight of July, 1946, p. 85.

124. Interview with Vishwanath,

125. *Fortnightly Report*, second fortnight of April, 1946, p. 117.

Now with its strong presence in the interiors of Punjab, the empowered feeling and the self confidence was so much exuberant in the RSS circles that some RSS personnels from Punjab namely Dharamvir, Harbans Lal and few others even went to see Golwalkar at Nagpur trying to convince him for a full fledged struggle against the 'Islamic *Jehadis* and the British'. Their point was the increasing audacity and aggressiveness of the Muslim League National Guards and other Muslim organizations and therefore the need of immediate remedial measures. As far as the British were concerned, their army was already crumbling with the powerful blows of Hitler with which it was engaged in the life and death struggle during the Second World War. Therefore, to cash on this situation the RSS decided to enter the field openly.¹²⁶ But Guru Golwalkar had the foresight to know the ground limitations of the RSS. Though in Punjab, the RSS was strong but the case was not same elsewhere in India. He understood well that for any direct combat with these forces, the RSS was still not strong enough and moreover in case of such an eventuality the forces hostile to the *Sangh* might join the opposite camps, which could be devastating for its long term aims.¹²⁷ This foresight of Golwalkar proved absolutely true when its weaknesses were vividly demonstrated during the first ban that was clamped on it on the eve of Mahatma's murder in 1948.

Conclusion:

The humble beginning of the RSS in Punjab by the three Marathi *pracharaks* sent by Hedgewar was testimony to the truth of growing Hindu revivalism. Punjab by the virtue of its peculiar strategic

126. M.L. Virmani, op. cit., p. 48.

127. Ibid., p. 49. *Hindutva* seed. There were situational advantages and disadvantages

location, demography and politics was the fertile ground for the present at the disposal of the *Sangh* in this region. The Hindus had minority status here and prior to the establishment of the RSS various Hindu organizations were leading the Hindu revivalist mode. More often than not these agencies were directly and indirectly purporting the idea of Hindu nationalism. The Muslims in this region were more vocal and were the dominant creed. The dominance of the Punjabi Muslim identity as it was in the case of modern Pakistan was also true for India seventy years back. The Hindu populace was socio-culturally, politically, disorganized. Moreover, in many pockets of the pre-partition Punjab the Hindu population was scarce, *e.g.* in the sub-montaine terrain of North West Pakistan, Salt Range *etc.* But in the urban clusters the Hindu and the Sikh population overwhelmed Muslims. Politically speaking the influence of the Congress, Unionists and later on the Muslim League was such, that it had little room for the organization like RSS with the socio-cultural beginning and political ending after looking at its contemporary perspective. These aforesaid conditions and situations were equally supporting and hampering the foundation of the *Sangh* here.

The *pracharaks* who were sent to Punjab for the *Sangh* work were totally devoted to the cause of *Hindutva* and *Hindu Rashtra*. They consolidated and gradually expanded the RSS in different pockets of the region which were hitherto unexploited by the Hindu revivalists. The peculiar practice of establishing contact with the prominent persons who were supposed to be the sympathizers of their ideology, emulating the native ways and mannerisms including local languages, targeting youth of the area, moving from place to place for increasing contacts, be it in the nearby towns or the far flung villages, they didn't mind traveling on foot or on bicycles, at the most. Their polite language and humble ways of living often attracted

people towards them.¹²⁸ This basic homework went a long way in strengthening the position the RSS in Punjab. They maintained this way of life with some modifications due to the changes brought in by the modernity even to this day.

Since its premature stage, the concept of publicity and propaganda was always abhorred by the RSS. The RSS in the earlier days did not heed the importance of publicity by the way of newspapers, journals, magazines, books or pamphlets. Their belief was that the *prima facie* character of the *swayamsevaks* should serve as publicity material. A small couplet was in vogue during those days, which used to be the punch line of the RSS cadres. It runs like this. "*Vrat-patra mein naam chhapega, pehnuga swagat samhar, chod chalo yeh shudra bhavana, Hindu rashtra ke taran har*".¹²⁹ So the high social and moral character of the *swayamsevaks* was looked upon as the biggest publicity material. Moreover, they felt that the ideology they were purporting and promoting was not an alien or new one, but rooted in the age old ethos of this nation. Their efforts were premised on the fact that the people were already known to this ideology, the need was only to refresh it.

The methodology adopted by the *Sangh* in Punjab was quite similar to that practised by it in other parts of India. The *shakha* network formed the basis of the organization and these served as *akharas* for the mental and physical exercises *i.e.* *sharirik* and *boudhik*. In Punjab, where the people were sturdy and sport loving, these curricula helped to garner much needed man power

128. Like suffixing 'ji' with name of everyone even 80 years old *swayamsevak* calls 20 years old by suffixing his name with ji. The humble ways included, sweeping their floors, washing their own utensils and clothes, dining by sitting on the floor and so on.

129. Interview with Balvir Sharma.

accompanied by the muscle power, which was displayed from time to time during skirmishes with the opponents. The programme was so much popular with the Hindu and the Sikh youth that the *Sangh* in Punjab began to use popular British idiom,

"The battle of Waterloo was won on the Cricket field of Eton and Harrow",

In their own context,

"The battle of *Hindu rashtra* would be won on the Kabbadi fields of the *Sangh shakhas*"¹³⁰

The lure of *shakhas* became so much among the Punjabi youth that in the walled city of Lahore and outside too, they began to organize them in the streets and in newly built colonies. Not only the lower rung of the middle classes, the upper middle classes and sometimes even the elite group of the population of the area begun to send their boys to the *Sangh shakhas*. The man making agenda of the *Sangh* was discernible from the fact that earlier the uniform and the *lathis* (sticks) of the upper class boys were carried by their servants. But slowly the transformation agenda of the *Sangh* started showing results and after some days of strenuous mental and physical conditioning these boys began to come in uniform right from their houses with the *lathis* on their shoulders.¹³¹ The work of the RSS was so influential in Lahore and was so much organized that the Muslims started telling their boys to avoid confrontation with the *dhoti* wearing Marathis (many Punjabis too by then had started wearing dhotis in Marathi style) and khaki knicker wearing Punjabis.¹³²

The milieu of Punjab in those days had an important

130. Pandit Lekhraj, op. cit., pp. 46, 47.

131. Interview with Balvir Sharma.

132. Ibid.

influence on the growth of the RSS in its initial stages. The RSS itself admits that much of this growth in the north India was due to the growing fear of the Muslim paramilitary movements particularly those of Khaksars (*belcha* party) ¹³³ In his letter to Hedgewar from Lahore on August 25, 1939, Golwalkar wrote, "Due to the awe inspired by Khaksars new groups were fast coming up".¹³⁴ In the post World War Second period, various other political organizations had cropped up in Punjab among the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. According to the Home Department's *fortnightly report*, "These militant groups continue to multiply. The stock excuse of each successive formation is the alleged certainty of the civil war in Punjab when war was declared in the Europe and therefore, the necessity of each community and sect to assert itself".¹³⁵ The RSS policy during this period therefore was influenced by the fears regarding the potential adverse affects of the war on the Hindu community. The British government was quite wary of the paramilitary activities of the RSS which included among others things, its uniform and the drill. In case of Punjab, these activities were closely watched by the British C.I.D. The British restlessness regarding these groups was also sensed by Hedgewar when in his letter dated on March 5, 1939 to a *pracharak* in Punjab, he stated "(...) at present my advice is not to change the name of the organization, you should continue, the programmes regarding games and the

133. The Khaksar party was formed in 1930 in Punjab to unite Muslims of South Asia into a single political front. In the year 1939, this organization claimed membership of 4 lac, mostly concentrated in Punjab, Sindh, Hyderabad and NWFP - Description in Shan Mohammad, *Khaksar movement in India*, Meenakshi Parkashan, Merrut, 1973.

134. N.H.Palkar, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

135. Government of India, Home Political File (I), No.18, 1940.

prayers. Our name does not figure anywhere (...). "¹³⁶ This letter showed impending danger that the juvenile organization of Doctor was facing.

Golwalkar on becoming *sarsanghchalak* decided to put on hold the military activities of the RSS after sensing the ban from the British authorities. On April 29, 1943 Golwalkar distributed circular to the senior RSS figures, including Madhav Rao Muley in Punjab, announcing termination of the RSS military department. ¹³⁷ This was due to the central government and the governor of Punjab's order under section 58(1), which stated that all the activities within the Punjab borders, carrying of weapons or such like equipments that could be used as weapons, military type of training, exercises and other activities were prohibited. ¹³⁸ Madhav Rao Muley had instructed all the regional *pracharaks* not to write letters as they might fall in the hands of the C.I.D. He further asked them to get themselves enrolled in some kind job or work to camouflage their real identity. ¹³⁹

The RSS adapted itself to the changed circumstances, thereby avoiding those actions, which might antagonize the British government but continued their activities in an alternative manner. The new methods were such designed that both the purposes might be served. So, *e.g.*, when khaki knickers were banned they started wearing blue ones, when prohibited from standing in a queue or in a straight line, they started sitting in the semi-circles, when gatherings of four or more people were banned they started bunching in the

136. Copy of letters available at the RSS Archives Keshav Kunj, Jhandenwalan, New Delhi and also at Hedgewar Bhawan, Nagpur.

137. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, New Delhi, Vistaar, 1987, p. 44.

138. N.H.Palkar, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

139. Interview with Ram Singh.

groups of three. The RSS leadership was of the view that as long as one didn't break the rule and abide by the law, the British authorities would not mess with them. This was perhaps the only thing that they feel good about the British.¹⁴⁰ In spite of all these bottlenecks their work grew gradually and stealthily.

It was not only the government, which was hostile to the Hindu nationalists. In spite of all the initial support and sympathy that the RSS extracted from the various quarters of its co-religionists in the long run they alienated themselves from it. Though in the individual capacity men from these groups participated in the *shakhas*. The reasons behind this phenomenon were not difficult to find. The RSS also drew flak from the Hindu Mahasabha whose Veer Savarkar was supposed to be the ideological mentor of Hedgewar and Golwalkar. The Hindu Mahasabha's disenchantment towards the RSS was due to its non-political nature and also the refusal by RSS of lending its cadres for the Mahasabha. After the assumption of the presidency of the Mahasabha, Savarkar openly showed his disdain for apolitical orientation of the RSS. But this fact also could not be denied that the fixed constituency of the Hindu Mahasabha provided RSS with readymade platform at many places in Punjab. The Mahasabhites even introduced the RSS *pracharaks* with the potential donors and recruits.¹⁴¹ The relationship between the two organizations started souring after the refusal of Hedgewar to lend the support of its cadres for the civil disobedience movement launched by the Mahasabha in the princely state of Hyderabad.¹⁴² The efforts of the Mahasabha to turn RSS into its 'Youth Wing' received setback when

140. *Rashtra Sadhana*, op. cit., p.146.

141 W. K. Andersen and S. Damle, op.cit., p. 39.

142. W.K. Andersen, 'The Rashtriya *Swayamsevak Sangh*', *Economic and Political Weekly*, (11, 18, 25, March and 1 April, 1972).

Guru Golwalkar assumed *sarsanghchalakship* in 1940. Savarkar had reservations regarding Golwalkar's saintly style and Golwalkar had reservations regarding Savarkar's unwillingness to compromise. Even though these happenings were taking place in far off Maharashtra but they had their echoes heard in the RSS and the Mahasabha circles of Punjab.

So, in Punjab during the first ten years, the RSS achieved much of its target. Its presence began to be felt right from Khyber to Yamuna including the remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir. During these years the national membership centre extended from Maharashtra to the north and beyond. The bulge in the RSS membership of Punjab was the classical example in the case. Most of the increase was in those areas which are now in Pakistan. However, even during this time the leadership in Punjab was predominantly Maharashtrian and Brahmanical, from Nagpur. But slowly the native Punjabis too climbed up in the hierarchy. The early recruits here were from the families who were into the small scale entrepreneurial orientation of these people might have been the reason for their attraction towards the *Sangh* and its revivalist agenda of the 'glorious great tradition of the Hinduism' of the yore. This also justifies the basis of the present orientation and dynamics of the RSS. The growing Muslim phobia and with its xenophobic connotations was the basic fuel for the growth of the RSS. The Hindu fear coupled with the Muslim aggressiveness swelled the RSS membership to a good extent.

Last but not the least an important character of the RSS movement during these years was its relative attraction to the boys of the lower castes and classes. This may be attributed to the fact that the Brahmin – non Brahmin question was never so much vocal here due to the bigger issues involved (Muslim and Christians). Indeed, the RSS in north India became alluring and attractive as a possible route

to an advanced status. The post-war expansion *i.e.* 1946 onwards will be dealt in the forthcoming chapter which will be focusing upon the growth and activities of the RSS in the period of bitter communal rivalry, partition holocaust and the refugee rehabilitation.

Chapter 4

The RSS From: 1946-1952

In this chapter we will be focusing on history of the RSS from the period 1946 to 1952. During this period, Punjab went through different upheavals which started with communal antagonisms, political manipulations, independence, partition, holocaust and relief of refugees from west Punjab. The time period of these six years was crucial for the RSS in the region as its future for the times to come would depend upon its activities during this period. The issues of this time were of prime concern to the RSS as the time had arrived for them to prove their mettle. The whole gamut of exercises that it had undertaken during the preceding ten years now needed an immediate implementation for which the *Sangh* was more than ready.

We will also be discussing in this chapter, ban on the RSS, which was clamped due to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. This was, perhaps, for the first time when the patriotic and nationalist credentials of the RSS were so seriously doubted. Though the RSS came out of this cauldron, but not unscratched. Further, we shall also be looking upon the role played by the RSS in the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian Union. For this purpose they participated in the Praja Parishad movement. As the RSS in J and K was under the Punjab unit of the RSS, role of the *swayamsevaks* from Punjab, particularly those from border areas, is worth mentioning. The socio-cultural support and mobilization, if any, generated by it, will also be pondered upon in this chapter.

Communal Situation of Punjab: Battlelines Drawn

As the sight of independence drew nearer, the ghost of partition started looming large. The provincial elections of February, 1946 proved watershed as the Muslim League gained ascendancy in

Punjab *vis-à-vis* the Unionists and the Congress. They bagged 75 seats and emerged as the single largest party in Punjab Assembly.¹ In spite of obvious debacles, the Unionists still managed to form the government. On March 7, Khizar Tiwana formed a new government with the support of Akalis and the Congress.² This precisely meant that Punjab provincial Muslim League was virtually outmanoeuvred by the other political players. These developments set provincial Muslim League on the path of uncompromising rhetoric of the demand for Pakistan. So the tone for the fresh spell of violence had been set. This is amply demonstrated by the governor's report in which it was said that the propaganda of the Muslim League was tantamount to incitement of violence.³ From this report we can very well gauge the turmoil that was prevailing in Punjab. Therefore, the stage had been set for the fresh bout as the Hindu and the Sikh volunteer corps were also engaged in similar kind of activities hostile to Punjab provincial Muslim League's National Guard, sword arm of the Muslim League. Therefore a war like situation was prevailing in mid 1946, in Punjab and other Muslim majority provinces. The Muslim League National Guards was reinforced and ex-military servicemen were called upon to enlist in the force.⁴

The membership of the RSS was growing as also the number of its drills and assemblies, particularly, in the Muslim areas.⁵

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1. For details of the election results see Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 150.
 2. Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India: 1936-1947*, OUP, New Delhi, 1987, p. 141.
 3. **Governor's report dated March 15, 1946**, IOL, L/P and J/5/249, P.139, cited in Anders Bjorn Hansen, *Partition and Genocide, Manifestation of Violence in Punjab: 1937-1947*, India Research Press, New Delhi, 2002, p. 90.
 4. Anita Inder Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
 5. **Fortnightly Report**, First Fortnight of May 1946, p. 111.

There was the reference in those reports that the RSS was increasingly getting involved in violence and it was felt that Punjab would blow up, if the political situation didn't improve.⁶ The passage of Direct Action resolution by the Muslim League Council was the proverbial last straw for the strife torn Punjab and it was fixed on August 16, 1946. The Muslims of Punjab welcomed the decision. The Punjab provincial Muslim League leaders like *Nawab* of Mamdot, Firoze Khan Noon, Sayed Maratib Ali, and Begum Aara Shah Nawaz sent telegrams to Jinnah and expressed their happiness over the decision.⁷ The popular Muslim newspapers too voiced the sentiments of Punjabi Muslims. According to *Nawa-i-Waqat*, "This is going to be a total war which shall be fought on every front, in every city, town, street and house (...) Muslim masses must be in a position to carry on the struggle till the final victory."⁸ Another prominent newspaper voicing *vox pop* by claiming to be the voice of the Muslims said, "The League's decision is in accordance with the general Muslim expectations"⁹ The Punjab Muslim Student Federation chalked out the detailed programme to conduct the Direct Action Day. This student organization deputed Muslim students, especially, to the countryside of Punjab in order to conduct Direct Action Day 'effectively'.¹⁰ The Direct Action of the Muslim League triggered off the worst rioting after the Second World War. There was complete strike in various towns and cities of Punjab like Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, Jhang, Sialkot, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Mianwali, Attock, Gujranwala, Muree, Wazirabad and many others. In the eastern Punjab Ambala, Karnal,

6. Fortnightly Report , First Fortnight of August 1946, p.71.

7. Shamasul Hasan Collection, Volume-4, pp. 48-69.

8. The Dawn, Delhi, August 3, 1946.

9. The Eastern Times, Lahore, August 17, 1946.

10. The Dawn, Delhi, August 6, 1946.

Gurgaon, Rohtak and in the central Punjab, Amritsar, Jalandhar and other places observed strike.¹¹ The meetings and deliberations were held at various places in which resolutions were passed against the dishonest British statesmen and the Fascist technique of the Hindu Congress.¹² Now it can be gauged from the propaganda of the Muslim League that it was the need of the time for the Hindus and the Sikhs to get militant, whereby they could effectively counter the Muslim League's communalism and protect their community. The tone of the Muslim newspapers too added fuel to the fire wherein they described the nationalist Congress as Hindu fascist. Now, if the Congress was bracketed by Muslims as Hindu, then we can very well estimate the condition of the average Hindu and the Sikh in the Muslim dominated areas. The RSS, therefore, was counter offensive in its response which, as the conditions suggested, had the overt and covert support of the Hindus, the Congress or otherwise.

As a measure to control the explosive situation, the Punjab Government declared the Muslim League, National Guard and the RSS, illegal on January 24, 1947.¹³ The predominant feeling within the government circles was that both the RSS and the National Guards were the communal bodies and a danger to peace. They believed that the RSS members were recruited from the orthodox Hindus and those of the National Guards from the Muslim League.¹⁴ But here one thing that was quite discernible was the non-political character of the RSS which was unconsciously accepted by the government, as its members came from the Hindu society whereas the character of the National

11. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1946.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Fortnightly Report*, First Fortnight of January 1947, p. 98.

14. "Jenkins to Pethick Lawrence, January 26, 1947", in Nicholas Mansergh and Pendrel Moon (eds.), *The Transfer of Power Volume-9*, London, 1970-83, pp. 556, 557.

Guard was purely political. But due to the mounting pressure, the government felt compelled to revoke the ban against these two private armies.¹⁵

The Muslim League's agitation in the earlier part of 1947 was an important factor in the communal rioting but the Hindus and the Sikhs were not without the guilt either. As Master Tara Singh on March 3 declared that, "Our mother land is calling for the blood and we shall satiate the thirst of our motherland with blood".¹⁶ As independence drew nearer, rural areas too came under the influence of riots. Attack on the villages, according to the government reports, followed certain *modus operandi*. A band of outsiders would first surround the village and then approach it, accompanied by beating drums and shouting of slogans.¹⁷ The violence did not emerge spontaneously by the mob action but was instead conducted in an orderly and rational manner by the members of the opposite communities. In a village near Rawalpindi, white flags were placed on the Muslim houses so that the attackers could spare them.¹⁸ The Muslim dominated regions of Attock and Rawalpindi in the month of March 1947 came under extreme savage attacks from the Muslim militias.¹⁹ In these areas there had been a "wide spread desire to rid many areas of all Sikhs and Hindus entirely for ever and the former sites of some houses vacated has already been ploughed upon".²⁰

15. *Ibid.*

16. G.D.Khosla, *Stern Reckoning, A survey of Events leading up to and following the Partition of India*, London, 1950, p.100.

17. Swarna Aiyar, "Violence and the State in the Partition of Punjab", Cambridge, 1994, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 50, cited in Anders Bjorn Hansen, *Partition and Genocide, Manifestation of Violence in Punjab; 1937 – 1947*, India Research Press, 2002, New Delhi, p. 112 .

18. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

19. "Jenkins to Abell, Telegram March 17, 1947" in TOP *op. cit.*, pp. 961, 962.

20. "C. Auchinleck to Abell, March 22, 1947", in *ibid.*, pp. 1004-1008.

The disturbances had also an effect on the character of the administration. The communal feeling overwhelmed and attempts were made to locally reorganize the civil services, the police and the army on purely communal lines.²¹ The relationship between the two communities was so severely affected that the possibility of cooperation between them now seemed a distant dream. The Hindus and the Sikhs were not far behind the Muslims in creating a vicious atmosphere. The Hindus were reportedly helping the Sikhs with money and propaganda including the contributions from the Congress party, which was now accused of communalism and of instigating disorder (at least in Punjab). This had dismayed even the Muslim Congressmen who felt that their parent body had discarded its pretence of nationalism and they were anxiously considering where the loyalty should be given.²²

The communal militias were soaring. A new Sikh corps had been formed at Amritsar and the Muslims had increased the number of volunteers, as reportedly another 5,630 youth had joined the Muslim League National Guards.²³ Among the bigger cities, Lahore and Amritsar were in the centre stage of disturbances because the population of the Muslims and non-Muslims matched to some extent with each other in these cities. In the Lahore city, for example, the Muslims were conducting a campaign to burn out non-Muslims from the beginning of April and in mid July the number of burnt out houses exceeded 700, which was not spontaneous and the arsonists were paid, as evidence suggested.²⁴ Further more, Sikhs were

21. Anders Bjorn Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

22. *Fortnightly Report*, Second Fortnight of 1947, p. 60.

23. *Fortnightly Report*, Second Fortnight of April 1947, p. 51.

24. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 229.

allegedly supported by the big Hindu businessmen financially besides receiving support from the Sikh princely states.²⁵ In Amritsar, since April 11, more than four hundred and sixty people were either killed or injured and since May 9; in Lahore, three hundred and twenty five persons became the victims of the communal strife.²⁶ The rioting in the rural areas of north western Punjab, however, exceeded the violence in the urban parts of the province. The private armies were surging and the tone of the press was becoming more and more belligerent and uncompromising. The localized violence earlier was now liberated and engulfed practically the whole of Punjab.

On June 3, the partition plan was announced with the transfer of power as early as 15th August.²⁷ In Punjab the plan was received with mixed feelings. It was neither rejected upfront nor met with ready acceptance either.²⁸ The Hindus in the west and the Muslims in the east were dissatisfied with the prospect of partition. The Sikh reaction was strongly against the partition because of their fear that it would divide them and reduce them to an insignificant minority in both an Indian and Pakistani Punjab.²⁹ The rioting in Amritsar and Lahore was becoming severe and one of the possible reasons behind this was the right to possess Punjab's two principal disputed cities.³⁰ From November 18, 1946 to May 15, 1947, reportedly, 3280 were killed and 1390 injured but the actual number was assumed to be even higher since figures from Rawalpindi and

25. "Abbott to Captain Brockman, May 21, 1947", TOP, Volume-10, *op. cit.*, p. 942.

26. Fortnightly Report, Second Fortnight of May 1947, p.36.

27. Anita Inder Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

28. Fortnightly Report, First Fortnight of June 1947, p.29.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

Gurgaon districts were still uncertain.³¹ According to the government view the Muslim League started the burnings and stabbings and the Hindu bombing was the work of the RSS.³² The partition was becoming an undisputed reality and the private armies were becoming more influential as greater number of people were volunteering to each of them. It was estimated that, on a whole, around 110,000 people were organized in some sort of military structure. Punjab remained tense and the clashes remerged in the cities of Gurgaon, Gurdaspur, Gujranwala and Jalandhar districts, not to mention the principal cities of Lahore and Amritsar.³³

The law and order situation had virtually broken down and this was especially true where there were hardly any police officers left since Muslims constituted around 90% of the Punjab police force.³⁴ The Muslim policemen in Amritsar were disarmed and they, with their families, had already started leaving. The Punjab disturbances were producing an average daily killing of about 100 people with occasional raids in which 70-80 people were killed in one full swoop.³⁵ Both urban and the rural areas of the Punjab seemed infected. The refugee trains were attacked and its inmates were butchered. There were retaliation and counter retaliations. In rural areas the Sikhs, moving in bands, were killing the Muslims but Muslims too were hitting back, like in Jelalabad village, in Lahore district, around 70 Hindus were massacred. The police in Lahore was in open connivance with the looters. Some policemen even took part in

31. "Abott to Abell, Telegram June 15, 1947, TOP", Volume-11, *op. cit.*, P.397.

32. "Jenkins to Mountbatten, Telegram June 24, 1947", in *ibid.*, pp. 605,606.

33. Fortnightly Report, First Fortnight of July, 1947, p.14.

34. Swrana Aiyar, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

35. "Report of Major General D.C.Hawthorn, August 11, 1947", TOP, Volume-12, *op. cit.*, pp. 667, 668.

looting houses. When about 15 Sikhs were killed in a gurudwara in Lahore city on August 11, the inspector general reported that the police almost certainly "connived at", if not actually carried out "this massacre".³⁶

After independence on August 20, the situation slightly improved in Lahore, Amritsar, Sialkot and Gujranwala while it deteriorated in the rural areas of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Gurdaspur. An unprecedented mass exodus started around this time. At the end of August, there were hardly any non-Muslims left in Lahore, compared to the 300,000 prior to rioting.³⁷ The mass exodus had reached gigantic proportions and the number of refugees crossing the border daily was between 100,000 to 150,000.³⁸ This exodus did not happen voluntarily but was forced upon the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs as they were being consistently attacked. The religious affiliations were now the sole criterion that decided where people should live.

The Punjab RSS and Communal Holocaust:

In this part of the chapter we will discuss the role played by the *Sangh* and its *swayamsevaks* in Punjab when the communal situation had deteriorated to an unmanageable extent. The RSS by now *i.e.* 1946-47, had assumed the shape of fully organized quasi military body of the Hindus furnished with dedicated *pracharaks* and disciplined cadres of the *swayamsevaks*. According to the RSS records, an ITC (Instructors Training Camp) was organized at Bhogpur

36. Anders Bjorn Hansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 146, 147.

37. G.D.Khosla, *op. cit.*, p.125.

38. Kirpal Singh (*ed.*), *Select Documents on the Partition of the Punjab 1947, India and Pakistan: Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh - India and Punjab - Pakistan*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 511-513.

in Punjab in July-August 1947. In this ITC, it was estimated that except for Ambala division, there were about 1136 *shakhas* of *Sangh* in the rest of the province. Out of these, there were 187 such *shakhas*, which had the daily presence of more than 100 *swayamsevaks*. The total presence in all the *shakhas* was recorded at 87,280.³⁹ In this camp the total participants were 1937, out of them 1,556 were participating in their first year and rest 382 were in their second year. Similarly, another ITC was organized at Sangrur in the same year where 649 *swayamsevaks* participated. All of them were in their first year training. Therefore, leaving Ambala, in these camps during that year a total of 2586 *swayamsevaks* participated. But due to the deteriorating situation, these camps, which were otherwise of one month duration, were concluded in twenty days. The *swayamsevaks* were instructed to go to their respective areas and work for the Hindu society.⁴⁰

As the stage had been set for the RSS and it was in this setting of near anarchy that it earned enormous goodwill for itself by assisting the Hindu and the Sikh refugees in their flight, protecting those who were entrapped in the Muslim dominated areas by arranging for self defence and, simultaneously, fighting with the Muslim hoodlums and many times attacking Muslims in retaliation. Chaman Lal, the RSS office secretary in Lahore at the time of partition, recalls that government officials in the eastern Punjab provided assistance to the RSS which also included issuance of weapons, while they were organizing rescue squads to bring refugees

39. *Rashtra Sadhana*, Lokhit Prakashan, Lucknow, (n.d.), p.148.

40. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *Jyoti Jala Nij Pran Ki*, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1999, p. 32.

to India.⁴¹ Even a critic of the RSS who was also a *swayamsevak* earlier, acknowledged that many Hindu Congress politicians in his own area approached the RSS officials for assistance in defending the Hindu minority. He remembered that *swayamsevaks* were assigned to guard Hindu homes, they collected weapons to use during the anticipated Muslim attacks, and they manufactured hand grenades. He also admits that the RSS, itself, did not organize retaliatory activities against the Muslims in their own area, though many individual *swayamsevaks*, on their own, were engaged in such activities. He also recalled that the RSS rescue efforts helped to bolster the pride and confidence among the demoralized Hindus of Punjab.⁴² The above said assertion also proved true during my interviews with various old *swayamsevaks* during my research fieldwork. However, during those years there were few hands clean. With the collapse of law and order in the Punjab, almost every community or party with its para military wings, was engaged in preparation of a similar kind. So in that case the RSS was only one of the many para military groups operating in the Punjab for offensive and defensive purposes. However, in the milieu of hate that existed at that time, it was difficult to demarcate what was offensive and what form was defensive.⁴³ According to one source, during the violence, he himself burnt the houses of some Muslims in *Dinanagar* (district Gurdaspur) so that the awed Muslims should flee from the town and, many a times, some individual

41. Interview cited in W.K. Andersen and S. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, New Delhi, Vistar, 1987, p. 48 Chaman Lal sometimes back was the in charge of Vishwa Vibhag, a RSS unit responsible for maintaining contacts with the RSS organs and *swayamsevaks* across the world.

42. K.D.Jhari, "I was a *Swayamsevak*: Creating the Urge to Kill", *Secular Democracy*, July 3, 1970, pp. 27-29.

43. Interview with Vishwanath and Satpal Kaka at Amritsar on September 10, 2006 and November 22, 2004, respectively.

swayamsevaks indulged in the activities of loot and plunder, sometimes in the buildings and *mohallas* vacated by the Muslim families and sometimes the carvans carrying Muslim refugees passing through their areas.⁴⁴ So there were instances when the members of the RSS fraternity indulged in all kinds violent activities.⁴⁵ But this was as well true of other organizations of the similar ilk. The incidents involving RSS were more rhetorted, perhaps, due to the fact that it was the best organised of the paramilitary groups operating in Punjab.

RSS during Partition: Examples of Offence and Defence:

The preparations within the *Sangh* were already in tandem with the ferocity of the violence. Many times it was to counter the provocative activities of the National Guards, whose attitude, even after revocation of the ban was of open defiance.⁴⁶ The provocative slogans shouted by them were the order of the day *e.g.* "*Leke rehengey Pakistan - Jaise liya tha Hindusthan*". [We will take Pakistan just as we once took Hindustan].⁴⁷ It was in this atmosphere where it was quite obvious that the RSS without the backing of any Hindu political party (Hindu Mahasabha was too weak be counted as one), had to rely on its own resources for the defence of the Hindu people. The preparations for the purpose included, among other things, the procurement of guns and grenades. They even had built small time factories for manufacturing bombs and there were incidents when accidents took place while making the bombs and sometimes, during

44. Interview with Avtar Krishan Vaid, at *Dinanagar* on June 15, 2007. He was born in 7.3.17, joined RSS in 1940. He was also an active member of the Congress in those times.

45. I.H. Qureshi, "A case study of Social Relations between Muslims and Hindus, 1935-47," in *Partition of India*, (n.d.), pp. 360-368.

46. *Civil and Military Gazzete*, "Punjab Government Press Communique", January 29, 1947.

47. G.D.Khosala, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

their carriage.⁴⁸ Apart from the fire arms, other items of the defence and offence which were widely used by the *Sangh* people included lathis, iron rods, chilly powers, bricks, stones, empty glass bottles and so on.

Herein below, there is a detailed description of the various incidents, riots in which the RSS was involved, either in protecting the Hindus or in organizing and perpetrating attacks on the Muslims. These incidents had occurred in different districts of Punjab and they were numerous, so for the sake of precision, only the important ones are described. My description in this regard is based upon various secondary sources as also the documents included in fortnightly reports, Transfer of Power papers, and interviews with the RSS people who were testimony to incidents and many a time, participants.

Rawalpindi

On March 6, 1947 some Muslim League leaders spread a rumour in the rural areas of Rawalpindi that Jumma Masjid, Rawalpindi had been razed to the ground by the non-Muslims and the streets and the roads of Rawalpindi were littered with dead bodies of the Muslims. The Muslims were incited to avenge Islam. As a result of this false information, thousands of non-Muslims were killed in the district. In this the Muslim military servicemen who were on leave, the Muslim police and civil officials actively helped the mob.⁴⁹ In this mayhem the Hindus among whom many were the *swayamsevaks*, actively participated in the fortification of Hindu *mohallas* (colonies) and for

48. Interview with Satpal Kaka and same thing was confirmed by Balvir Sharma at Jalandhar.

49. Report of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, 'Facet Finding' Branch, Government of India, cited in Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 621, 622.

sometime repulsed the attack but eventually were overpowered by the Muslim mob.⁵⁰

In another incident of Rawalpindi district in the town, Gujjarkhan, Muslim mob's attack was repulsed by the vigilant Hindus and Sikhs in March 1947 because they were already cautioned about the similar attacks taking place in other areas of Rawalpindi. At that time also the Hindu and the Sikh *swayamsevaks*, due to their training in the *Sangh shakhas*, managed to save the town and after a five hour encounter, the mob was repulsed.⁵¹ Similarly, on September 14 a Muslim mob of about two thousand, armed with shotguns, axes, *dangs*, *etc.*, attacked *mohalla* (colony) Kishanpura and as a result, many non Muslims were killed. The raiders set four houses on fire, which were completely gutted. The non Muslims organized by the RSS *swayamsevaks* resisted the attack as they too had collected some armaments and succeeded in killing five raiders.⁵²

Lahore

In Lahore, the foothold and goodwill of the RSS was so strong among the Hindus that during the riots most of the Hindu masses approached the *Sangh* office for help.⁵³ In the month of August, communal conflagration was at its apex in Lahore. It was reported by the government agencies that the aggressors had been entirely the Muslims and most of the victims were of course the Hindus. The disturbing feature in Lahore was practical defection of police, most of whom were the Muslims. There was evidence that the

50. M.C. Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 175-177. Also interview with Vishwanath.

51. *The Tribune*, Lahore, March 16, 1947; also see M.C. Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp.179, 180 and G.D. Khosla, *op. cit.*, p 110.

52. *Report of Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation*, GOI, also interview with Vishwanath.

53. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 69.

police joined the mob in carrying out arson and murder.⁵⁴ In the same report it was also mentioned that 20 to 30 houses were burnt and a thick pall of smoke had covered the sky. The villages around Lahore were the worst affected.⁵⁵ In such an atmosphere, the *Sangh* came into action with all the offensive and defensive agendas in its kitty.

In August, 1947, a meeting was organized in the house of one Chawala which was attended by the *nagar karyavaha* of Lahore, Gopal Chander Dev. They were apprehending an attack on Bedenpur locality and so to chalk out a possible strategy to save it, as it was the Hindu dominated colony. The day was saved by the active cooperation of *Sangh* with the prominent role played by an advocate, Jitender Chawala, who was the *vibhag karyavah* of the *Sangh* in Lahore and Gopal Chander Dev.⁵⁶ In case of Kasur, which was also the tehsil of Lahore; the RSS had its firm holding. By virtue of its spy network, they came to know about an imminent mob attack on the Hindus of Kasur. The *sanghchalak* of Kasur was Dinanath who organized *Sangh* workers to form a front against the intruders and simultaneously sent news to the Indian army, which was stationed at Ferozepur, for help. Though Kasur was saved due the timely arrival of the Indian army but in the ensuing conflict about 7-8 people were killed.⁵⁷ Similarly, the RSS came to know that the mobs were preparing for an attack on Sarin *mohalla*, which was a Hindu dominated colony in Lahore. The attack was being planned in the Mochi *mohalla*, a Muslim majority area. The *karyavah* of this colony's *shakha* was one Rajaram Singh and *vibhag karyavah* was Asharam. The RSS here was lacking in

54. "Minutes of Joint Defence Council Meeting, August 16, 1947", cited in Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 489-494.

55. *Ibid.*

56. M.C. Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 70, 71.

57. Interview with Dinanath at Ferozepur, March 23, 2007.

armaments and, therefore, to repulse the attack roof tops of the houses were fortified with, red chilly powder, boiling oil, stones, bricks, *etc.* All the doors of the *mohalla* were left open to bait the intruders. On March 7 the attack took place but was repulsed. In the conflict 16 *swayamsevaks* were killed and Rajaram Singh, Dilawar Singh and some other RSS workers were arrested by the Balouch army. These workers were later on acquitted by the court.⁵⁸

Kuchan Sethan was another locality of Lahore which was dominated by the Hindus and as the name suggests, by the rich Hindus. To protect this locality the duty was assigned to a *swayamsevak* named, Shyam Krishan Chopra and another. In this locality, besides other Hindu families, the families of *vibhag karyavah* Vishwamitra and former *prant pracharak* Kashmiri Lal were also residing. As August 14 approached, the local Muslims began to celebrate independence and partition. In their celebration, they simultaneously began to attack Hindu houses. Shyam Krishan Chopra and Vashisht (another doctor *swayamsevak*) had procured one 3°3 rifle for safety and, simultaneously, they had bribed the Muslim havaladar with Rs 500 and a bag of wheat flour so that he would remain a silent spectator and not an accomplice to the mob. The houses were fortified and slowly the Hindu families started drifting towards the relief camp, which was organized at D.A.V. College, Lahori Gate, while the *swayamsevaks* engaged the mob in offensive. From there, on August 18, the families were taken to Amritsar in Omni Bus Service.⁵⁹

Multan

It was the month of March and the RSS *sarkaryavaha*,

58. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 94, G.D.Khosla, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

59. Madan Lal Virmani, *Bharat Vibhajan Ka Dukhant Aur Sangh*, Volume-4, Lokhit Prakashan, Lucknow, 2001, pp. 51-55.

Bala Saheb Deoras, was on his Punjab tour. During the course of his tour, a programme was organized in Multan on March 3, 1947. But as the Unionist Ministry had resigned under the pressure of the Muslim League, the situation of Multan too, turned grave. Lekhraj Sharma was the *vibhag pracharak* and Burman was the *sanghchalak* of Multan at that time. It was apprehended by the RSS that the National Guards would attack them as they were becoming more and more violent after collapse of the Unionists. So on March 4 all the *swayamsevaks* were ordered to gather at 'Hindu Dangal' an exercise arena surrounded by the temples. As the *Sangh* was ill equipped for the possible attack, therefore, they used stones to counter the attackers while keeping themselves inside the Dangal. Also to save the Hindu population of the city about 50 *swayamsevaks* were dispatched and the rest fortified them inside the Dangal by closing its gate. Lekhraj, alongwith 25 *swayamsevaks*, was asked to protect the Lakshmi Narayan temple and from there somehow they arranged a gun and some spears and swords. The attack was firmly repulsed, but as the mob was growing bigger, Burman escaped through the mob in the guise of a Muslim chanting *allah-ho-akbar* and approached the nearest army cantonment where the Dogra regiment was stationed. It was only after the arrival of the army that the *swayamsevaks* were saved but not without losing some of them. Lekhraj was bitterly wounded in the conflict.⁶⁰

A small Hindu village of Rampur in tehsil Kabirwala of district Multan too witnessed similar scenes. As a total Hindu village, Rampur, inspite of the small population of 400, had discerning presence of the *swayamsevaks*. When the news of disturbances

60. Interview with Pandit Lekhraj Sharma, Jalandhar and also see M.C. Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-127.

spread, the *Sangh* people here started preparing for the reckoning by assimilating arms. The village was attacked on September 28 and two attackers were killed by one *swayamsevak*, Shivram. But they could not hold for long and, therefore, the women folk of the village started killing themselves. Till the time Indian army along the local Muslim deputy superintendent of police reached the site at least 11 women had killed themselves and some *swayamsevaks* were also killed in the conflict.⁶¹ There was also an instance of Makhdoompur town where planned attack by the National Guards took place on the non Muslims on September 26, 1947, the local assistant sub inspector of police and one retired sub inspector were the active intruders. Out of the total non-Muslim population of 4000 only 150 survived. Almost all the *Sangh* workers, while defending the village, got killed.⁶²

Sialkot

In Sialkot the RSS had a sound *shakha* network spread with around 50 *upshakhas*. The district pracharak here was Ishwar Chandra Mahajan; the *nagar sanghchalak* was Charandas Puri. After knowing the plans of the Muslim League National Guard, the Hindus of the city started doing fortification in their *mohallas* (colonies) and houses. The *upshakhas* were made the centres for offensive and defensive pursuits and, therefore, the arms and other weapons were piled up. On August 11, rioters attacked Jain *mohalla* of the town. The riot went on for two days and as the resistance of the Hindus started

61. Interview with Bhagwan Dass Makkar, *sanghchalak* of Shivaji Nagar Merrut city, U.P. who was an eyewitness to episode on November 1, 2006 at Keshav Kunj, New Delhi, also see, G.D.Khosla, *op. cit.*, P.186 and Report of Work by Liaison Agency in District Multan, East File No.LIX/2, Punjab Liaison Agency Records, Punjab State Archives, Patiala.

62. *Ibid.* and also mentioned in M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 136, 137.

petering out, they planned to stop firing to pretend that they had been left with no arms and ammunition. And then to took them unawares. It was simply a guerrilla tactics. Their plan fructified and so on August 13, the Muslims were pressurised to come on a peace table. It was then decided that the Hindus be given safe passage to march towards Sialkot cantonment where a refugee camp was organized under the auspices of the Indian army.⁶³

There is another story of Badomali town in Narowal tehsil of Sialkot. This town was famous for its textiles and jewellery trade. In the population of approximately 10,000, the proportion of Hindus was around 50%. After the making of Pakistan, the situation of this town turned tense and therefore, for the security of the Hindu mohallas, *swayamsevaks* started patrolling the area, one by one. In spite of the peace settlement that the Muslims would not attack the Hindus, some rogues invited Muslims from the nearby town Campbellpur wherein some Muslim refugees had already arrived for attack. Due to ill equipment of the RSS, it was decided to call the Indian army form Dera Baba Nanak as there was also the office of the Punjab Relief Committee. To do the task, two *swayamsevaks* guised themselves as the Muslims (Parasram and Tilakraj Grover turned Shahadat Ali and Rashid Ahmed respectively). The town was attacked on August 29. The mob was accompanied by the Muslim army. In the ensuing conflict number of Hindus got killed and among them there were several *swayamsevaks*. According to the official estimate, about 5000 were killed and 500 girls were abducted. And according to RSS sources, only 500 were saved and the rest perished. The left people

63. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-101.

were taken to the refugee camp on arrival of the Indian army.⁶⁴

Gujranwala

This incident was of a small town of Shampur in district Gujranwala. The Muslim *zamindars* of this town had planned to convert Hindus of the area. But they were prevented in the pursuit by the Hindus who unitedly resisted them with the active support of the RSS *shakha* of the town. The RSS, for that purpose, had collected some country made rifles and bombs and further anticipating the vast number of Muslim population, they attacked the police station and by killing some constables they looted seven rifles. They also sent some *swayamsevaks* to the main office of the RSS at Gujranwala to procure help. Their stiff resistance paid off when the attack of the local Muslims was repulsed and in the conflict some attackers were also killed. The Hindus of the town too suffered heavy loss of life as the Balouch army was assisting the mob. The things were settled when an unexpected help came from the Dogra regiment under the command of Major Ram Singh who seemed to be impressed by discipline and bravery of the *swayamsevaks*.⁶⁵

Montgomery

This was an incident of Basirpur Mandi, in Pakpattan tehsil of Montgomery district. On August 15 the Hindus of this town came to know that their area was going to be merged with Pakistan. A *fatwa* was issued against the Hindus of the *mandi* by the local *maulvis*. So to save themselves, about 4000 Hindus assembled inside the *mandi* which had a vast space. The gates of the *mandi* were locked and electricity current was passed through them. The RSS *swayamsevaks*,

64. "Report of Work in Sialkot district, L.A.R. File No.LVII/22 18-B"; in Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, also see M.C.Vajpayee and S. Paradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104.

65. *Hindu*, (Urdu Daily) Jalandhar, January 12, 1984.

under the leadership of *mukhya shikshak* (head instructor) Hansraj, accumulated other Hindu youth assembled in the *mandi* and organized defence by collecting every possible weapon. Many women who had assembled there committed suicide to save their honour because of the imminence of their falling prey to the Muslims. When the fall of the *mandi* looked imminent, *swayamsevaks* opened the gate and attacked the mob with all their might. The help from the Indian army came when only 10-12 people were left. In the conflict Hansraj was also severely injured but remained alive.⁶⁶

Similar was the case of Noorshah town. The Hindus here constituted 35% of the total population. The major riot broke out here in the month of July when the formation of Pakistan was taken as a settled fact. The RSS people of the town with the help of other Hindu men, organized a defence for themselves, simultaneously sending message to main office at Montgomery seeking help. The help from Montgomery arrived in about an hour when the *swayamsevaks* of Montgomery arrived at Noorshah in the army jeeps and army clothes along arms collected for the purpose [The jeeps and other military material was purchased by the RSS as a junk from the army which was repaired by them to be made fit for use]. The army attire of the RSS men was enough to scare the mob who took them as Indian army. In spite of heavy casualties, many were saved.⁶⁷

Gujrat

A rumour was floated in the town that the Sikhs of the neighbouring villages of the Tahli Sahib and Mattewal were preparing to attack the Muslims. On this pretext, the Muslim mob attacked the

66. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-150.

67. Interview of Vithal Rao Devdhare the then Montgomery tehsil *pracharak*, cited in M.L.Virman, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

Hindus and the Sikhs of the area which was followed by the burning of the Lakshmi Naryan temple. The RSS helped the locals in organizing defence of the village and repulsed the attack for sometime. Two Sikhs (shaven, *sahajdhari*) were sent for procuring help and with the arrival of the Indian army regiment the people were saved. They were further evacuated to the refugee camps. This incident occurred on August 18, 1947 and this mayhem went on for some days, and after the evacuation of the Hindus and the Sikhs, gurdwara Tahli Sahib was burnt.⁶⁸ There was an account of Kunja village, which was brutally attacked on August 12 resulting into the massacre of about 350 Hindus. The girls were kidnapped for conversion and marriage by the Muslims. A local RSS leader Khanna, with the help of the commanding officer of the army stationed there organized the rescue operation of these girls. A similar kind of incident took place at Jhamroo village where 60 Hindu families who were going to be proselytized, with the help of Madras regiment were saved.⁶⁹

The above said description gives an insight into the work that the RSS was broadly indulged in, Punjab. These scattered examples were of western Punjab which had a Muslim majority and, therefore, the work of RSS here was predominantly defensive *i.e.* to save the Hindus from the attacks, arrange for their safe evacuation, establish relief camps and so on. The reasons for the RSS being defensive here are not hard to find and most important of all was the scarce Hindu population and the vast Muslim majority. Secondly, the Muslim League National Guards was strong here. Thirdly, other Muslim militias like Khaksars and Ahrars were also active and many

68. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp.193, 194, Also reported in G.D.Khosla, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155 and M.L.Virman, *op. cit.*, pp. 144, 145.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 195, and p. 157.

a time worked in tandem with the National Guards. Fourthly, as various government reports suggested, the police and the army of the Muslim dominated areas were openly communal and partial in the communal conflagrations and at several instances they joined the rioters in their pursuits. But one thing that went in favour of the Hindus and particularly the RSS was the strong sense of unity, which was the result of the social, religious and political situation and also the work undertaken by the RSS. Now, in the forthcoming section we will be discussing the examples of eastern Punjab where the RSS was on its offensive, though defence was still the primary agenda.

EASTERN PUNJAB

Amritsar: The city of Amritsar was the second most important bastion of the RSS in Punjab, the first being Lahore. In spite of a sizeable population of the Hindus and the Sikhs in this district, the Muslims were quite vocal and strong here. The reason behind their assertiveness was the opening of a regional office of the Muslim League in Amritsar, which was earlier at Lahore, in March 1947. Its opening was enough to rally the Muslims behind it. The major conflagration occurred in the month of March and sporadic riots, which followed, continued for atleast six months. It was the situation of a virtual civil war between the Muslims on one side and the Hindus-Sikhs on the other. The RSS was ready with Inderpal, the *pracharak* and Baldev Prakash, his junior, at the helm of affairs. The riot began on March 5, 1947 and the center of the attack was Sharifpura, Katra Sher Singh Chowk, Muslim M.A.O. College, *masjid* Khairdeen, Hathi Gate, Katra Karam Singh, *etc.* There were the incidents of widespread loot, arson and killing. On March 6, a train was attacked at Sharifpura, which was coming from Pathankot to Amritsar; the victims were Hindus and the Sikhs. And then to strike a final blow to the adversaries a plan was hatched by the Muslim

League to attack the Golden Temple, because at that time, most of active the Sikh volunteers had gone to Anandpur Sahib for the *hola-mohalla* celebrations. Due to the spy network of the RSS, the plan was divulged to them and, therefore, they started preparations for the counter offensive. The RSS volunteers attacked the Muslims at Chowk Fhawara with sticks, swords, spears, crude bombs, *etc.* This unanticipated attack of the khaki knickers was enough to flee the Muslims attackers. To protect the Golden Temple various groups of *swayamsevaks* were deputed in the different streets and *mohallas*. These groups were under the command of the *swayamsevak*, Devi Dayal. Around the gurudwara, about 45 fully equipped *swayamsevaks* were deputed. The struggle ensued between the warring groups on March 5 and 6. But, ultimately, the gurudwara was saved. This incident, besides other sources, was quoted by Harbans Singh in his letter to the editor of Hindi daily, *Punjab Kesari*, Jalandhar and was published on May 31, 1982. Again on March 9, inspite of curfew in the town, National Guard volunteers again started marching towards the Golden Temple and at that juncture, about 100 people were inside the premises and outside the temple there were a few sevadars (workers). The *swayamsevak* Baldev Prakash was instrumental this time in the defence of the gurudwara. He, alongwith 40 other *swayamsevaks*, organized the defence. As there was curfew in the city, they disguised themselves as army men because Baldev Prakash had the army uniform and so, along with his comrades, he managed to pass the curfew-ridden Amritsar and reached the vicinity of the Golden Temple. Here again, the clash occurred at Chowk Fhawara and Namak Mandi. After sometime, another clash occurred at Hall Bazar. Ultimately, the attack was repulsed. Many Muslims were killed in the conflict and much of their property was looted and destroyed. Though

the loss of Hindu life was less, the loss of property was more than that of the Muslims.⁷⁰

After this episode of the protection of the Golden Temple, the Hindus were now on the offensive. The RSS too was overwhelmed with this victory and now, with increased confidence, they started preparing for the upcoming bouts. For the purpose, they collected firearms from every possible outside source because of the stringent restrictions in Punjab. These people procured arms from the neighbouring states both British Indian and princely. The N.W.F.P., C.P., princely states of Kapurthala, Patiala, and Bikaner were the resourceful areas. Many a time along the *swayamsevaks*, their wives too helped in bringing weapons from the far flung places. There was one example of Durgadass of Chhajju Mishr Gali (Amritsar) who along his wife visited Peshawar several times for the said purpose. Similarly, Gali Kalali resident Baijnath and his wife Raman Kumari too brought arms from Peshawar. The wife of Dharam Chand, another resident of Amritsar, named Charandevi, a brave woman, who many a time brought the arms all alone when the need arose, from Peshawar, Dehradun and other areas *etc.*⁷¹

Another round of fresh conflict began in the last week of April and continued till August 16. During this time, the Hindus were in an attacking mode with the RSS in lead. The Government records too say a similar story. In his letter to Jinnah, Sir Francis Mudie (governor of west Punjab) said, "The fact that RSS Sangh are participating with the Sikhs in attacks on the Muslims in Amritsar

70. This whole episode is based upon my interview with Satpal Kaka, Amritsar, Ram Singh, Delhi, Vishwanath, Amritsar and Punjab Kesari, Jalandhar, May 31, 1982.

71. M.C. Vajpayee and S.Pradhar, *op. cit.*, p. 306, also interview with Satpal Kaka, Vishwanath and Ram Singh.

seems to me to be very significant (....)."⁷² This clearly shows that the violent strikes of the RSS were now clearly against the Muslims who were now on the defensive. The targets of these attacks were the bastions of the Muslim League in the town and the localities of Sharifpura, Katra Sher Singh, chowk Farid were the first to fall in line. Then, Katra Karam Singh was plundered, the regional office of the Muslim League was burnt, M.A.O. College also suffered heavily by virtue of its being the breeding ground of the activists of the Muslim League. One important fact that should again be emphasized here was the active support of the Sikh *jathas* to the RSS. By the dusk of 1947, Amritsar, practically, became Muslim less.⁷³

There was another example of the RSS attack on the Muslims, though this time it was unprovoked but was the result of earlier misgivings of the local Muslims internalized by the RSS and vented at this time. The *swayamsevaks* under the lead of Baldev Prakash, attacked the Muslim population inside the Loh Gate with all the resources and the might at their disposal. This attack, according to the RSS sources, was in retaliation to the May 10 incident when seven Hindus and Sikhs were killed and burnt with the help of petrol in the vicinity of *idgah* in the Damganj area. In the RSS records though exact figures were not available, but it was believed that a good number of Muslims were slaughtered.⁷⁴ So now, the rumours went round that the Rahtriya *Swayamsevak* Sangh had taken upon itself the duty of defending the Hindu life and property. There were the cases of the Muslims being stabbed both in Lahore and Amritsar. The results

72. Letter quoted by Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 529-532.

73. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 306, 307.

74. *Civil and Military Gazzete*, May 16, 1947 and also see M.L.Virmani, Volume-4, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

achieved by the RSS were, however, grossly exaggerated. The Hindus now started boasting frequently that they did not lack courage in striking back. Notwithstanding the Hindu boasting in Amritsar, it was reported that the score was about even, though the Hindu loss in property was several times the Muslim loss.⁷⁵ So, it was quite vivid that in the eastern Punjab areas, the repercussions of the western became obvious and the lead was taken by the RSS and the Sikh *jathas*, who many a time worked jointly.

Gurdaspur: According to the Punjab Boundary Commission, district Gurdaspur was destined to go into Pakistan if the temporary drawn border was to be considered.⁷⁶ But inspite of that, there was no widespread panic in the district. The strong presence of the RSS in this border district was probably one of the reasons. Till August 15, both the flag of Indian Union and that of Pakistan were furling here. Here was an example of tehsil Shakargarh of the district whose fate was, ultimately, decided in favour of Pakistan. The RSS office of Shakargarh was in the town of Sukhochak where the *mandal karyavaha* was Rattan Lal Gupta and tehsil *pracharak* was Manohar Joshi. The local RSS had created awe in the minds of the Muslims by sending some of its *swayamsevaks* to Peshawar. Though apparently it was to assist the RSS there, but on their way back, they brought crude bomb making techniques, some bombs and rifles. When the communal situation turned worse in other regions of Punjab, Sukhochak too felt the heat. Chhajju Ram and Rattan Lal, the two most sought after *swayamsevaks* by the local Muslim League and the police tested a crude bomb to frighten the, Muslims so that the sight of the partition

75. G.D.Khosla, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

76. Mehar Chand Mahajan, *Accession of Kashmir to India: The Inside Story*, Institute of Public Administration, Sholapur, 1950, p. 6.

they might not create problem for the Hindus. This resulted in a police raid but the *swayamsevaks* went underground and the arms were shifted to safer place. This further frightened the local Muslims who, ultimately, parted ways during the partition in a peaceful manner.⁷⁷

Dinanagar was another small town in tehsil Pathankot of Gurdaspur district. Here *nagar karyavah* was Avtar Krishan Vaidya who recalls that as August 15 approached the Muslim thanedar of *Dinanagar* disarmed the Hindu and the Sikh constables and instigated the local Muslims to loot Hindus. But here too the RSS was prepared for the protection and attack. The *swayamsevaks* assembled the prominent Hindus of the town at night and asked them to collect money for the arms. About Rs 50,000 were collected in a night and the money was given to the RSS for procuring arms. After August 15, the RSS, deliberately attacked the Muslims to scare them to flee. One big empty house of a local Muslim was burnt at night and simultaneously drums were beaten to terrify the Muslim populace which yielded positive results for the RSS. Next morning, many Muslim families started fleeing. Appropriating this disorder the individual RSS workers also stated looting the Muslims who were approaching the town from other parts of eastern Punjab on their way to the west. However, there was no evidence of RSS leadership ordering them to loot, and most of the times, these *swayamsevaks* were instigated by their own family members out of greed.⁷⁸

There was another example of the Dalhousie Camp in the Gurdaspur district. Here *upmandal karyavaha* Devi Lal Sharma and

77. This episode is based upon my interview with Chajju Ram Gupta, an ex-MLA of Pathankot, at Pathankot on June 15, 2007. Also see M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-340.

78. This whole episode is narrated by Avtar Krishan Vaidya.

mandal karyavaha was Mahashay Lal Chand. The RSS spies gave them information that National Guards had made a plan to kill 10-12 important workers of the *Sangh* and after that, they had planned to loot the town. In anticipation of the attack, the RSS prepared itself and before the National Guard's attack, they with all the available sources and weapons at their disposal, attacked first. The hand grenades and other crude bombs were hurled at the Muslim colonies in the Dalhousie Camp, Sadar and the G.P.O. area. This resulted into heavy casualties among the Muslims and considerable loss of their property.⁷⁹

Ferozepur: This was the case of Abohar town in the Ferozepur district where the RSS incharge of the town was Balvir Sharma (The same person who started the RSS work in Montgomery district (Okara and Pakpattan) and a detailed discussion about his work there has been made in chapter 3). The local Muslims had already planned a riot in the town and this was reinforced by the arrival of the Baluch regiment in the town, though apparently it was given the charge of controlling the disturbance. Due to the spy network of the RSS, Balvir Sharma came to know about the planning of wholesale slaughter of the Hindus and the Sikhs of Abohar. By their good luck, the police incharge of Abohar was a Hindu and a sympathizer of the RSS. He had already disarmed the Muslim constables under his charge whose number was more than those of the Hindu constables who were 12 in number. Also by virtue of his good relations with the zamindars of the nearby villages, Balvir Sharma managed to collect arms and other weapons. It was again the good fortune of the Hindus that the tehsildar of Abohar was a Sikh (Abohar was the tehsil of Ferozepur district). Initially, he

79. Interview with Devi Lal Sharma resident of Pathankot at Pathankot, on December 25, 2005.

was reluctant to help the RSS because they were demanding a written order from him (tehsildar) ordering the commanding officer of the Baluch regiment to rest that night and to take the charge only the next day. The reply of the tehsildar to the *Sangh's* entreaties was initially negative who said, "Let those lalas (Hindu richman) die" [*Marne do in lala logon ko*]. Balvir Sharma got annoyed and said, "If lalas will be going to die, then you too will not be spared. The Baluch regiment will kill you first and if by chance you are saved then I myself will shoot you."

Due to the *Sangh's* influence in the area, the tehsildar ultimately yielded. The order of the tehsildar was produced before the commanding officer of the Baluch regiment and Balvir was introduced to him as the naib-tehsildar. The army officer, initially, dismissed the order by saying that they were armymen and so there was no question of their fatigue and therefore, they would not take any rest. He was adamant on taking the charge of the city at the moment his regiment arrived that very night. But Balvir Sharma pressed upon him said that this was the order of the area incharge and he was supposed to obey it. The army officer grudgingly yielded in the end.

Balvir Sharma, in his pursuit, was actively supported by Abohar tehsil *sanghchalak*, Mukand Lal Setia and *nagar sanghchalak* Sriram. They further planned to befool the army. Four jeeps were arranged and armed *swayamsevaks* and other Hindu youth of the town fully dressed in the police uniform and heavily armed, mounted themselves on it. To pretend that police was on patrol they, periodically, moved those jeeps from the road in front of the rest house where army officer was staying so as to create an impression that the police was doing its duty. Simultaneously, in case of any exigency, two bulbs—one green and other red, was hung on the RSS office with the help of bamboo sticks. These were the signals, with

the red bulb showing danger and the green one showing that every thing is all right. Along this, many people mounted themselves on the rooftops, armed with rifles and country made bombs, so that if Baluch army dared to venture out they might be attacked and killed at once. Seeing the failure of their scheme, the local Muslims hatched an alternative plan under which the mounted armed horsemen were to be brought from the nearby villages. But this one too, failed.

During this conflict the RSS had already mounted its *swayamsevaks* on the trees with the guns and torches in their hands on the route of those horsemen. The things went as planned and the Muslim horsemen were waylaid. One *swayamsevak* lit the light of torch in the direction of the horsemen and the other shot him down. In this way five-six horsemen were killed and the rest fled in commotion. Similarly, there was another incident when coming from Bighad (district Hisar) a Muslim refugee caravan was attacked by the Hindus in Abohar. At that juncture the RSS people didn't stop the looting but, simultaneously, didn't let other Hindus (RSS and non RSS background) to take home the booty. Balvir Sharma, the RSS leader, instructed them to preserve it for those Hindu refugees who were coming from the western Punjab.⁸⁰

These instances of the RSS offensive and defensive campaign during the turmoil though were the scattered ones but speak of the agenda, which was core of its foundation. Its range of activities from awakening Hindus and wiping out the threat of its enemies was

80. The whole episode is narrated by Balvir Sharma at Jalandhar during my interview with him. He told me that he was appointed as the *pracharak* in Abohar at the time of partition and before that he had joined CATA (Central Military Accounts) but had to relinquish his job when persuaded by M.R.Muley (The punjab *pracharak*) to work as a *pracharak* in Abohar.

explicitly demonstrated during these years. Although these examples did not cover Punjab yet broadly the situation was similar at other places also where the RSS was active. An important feature of the RSS working in those days was their tuning to the situation prevailing at a particular place. In the areas where the population of the Muslims was in greater proportion *vis-à-vis* the Hindus and the Sikhs, it remained mostly on the defensive. Its work centred on uniting the Hindus there, so that in case of any eventuality the populace could defend itself. They were hardly in any attacking mode here, atleast in an overt manner. Also the local police, which was predominately the Muslim (as in case of whole of Punjab), kept tab on them, closely watched their activities and was always on the hunt for any petty excuse to nab them. So the RSS people were more than cautious there and thus acknowledged their shortcomings.

However, in the Hindu and the Sikh dominated places their activities were belligerent. A sense of self-confidence, naturally, comes when one is surrounded by its own people and this is equally valid for an organization as for a person. The god marches with the largest armies and therefore, the RSS in the Hindu majority areas afford to be offensive. But most of the times, their attacks were based upon retaliation of the happening taking place in the western Punjab or precisely in those areas where the Hindus were a minority and suffering from the majority Muslim. This organization, however, many a time, adopted attacking posture in anticipation of the Muslim attack or mischief. In their pursuits many times the government officials and politicians supported them and even sometimes demanded their help in protecting their families and other Hindus.

Methods and Strategies Adopted by the RSS:

It is but curious to know how the RSS managed to work in the hostile environment. What were their means and the methods they

adopted to achieve their objectives? By closely looking at the *modus operandi* of this organization, we can very well gauge the presence of strong networking among the *shakhas* at different places of Punjab. In this section we will see how this strong networking and support of the RSS sympathizers helped RSS to work during the riots. Their procurement of arms, their spy network and quick adaptation to the situation are the issues of interest and understanding.

The Spy Network: This was one of the most important aspects of the RSS strategies during the partition. They had their spies in the police, among the Muslims and in other government agencies. This helped the RSS knowing, in advance, the plans and activities of the government and the Muslim militias. The spy information proved beneficial for the RSS in chalking out their future course of action and, sometimes, saved them from the impending government and Muslim offensive. Therefore, the RSS had made a separate spy department and members of which mostly remained in the guise of Muslims (like *faqirs*, hawkers, servants in shops, *etc.*). They had trained themselves in the Muslim customs and traditions. Some of them had gone far enough to get themselves circumcised. These people then had enrolled themselves in the Muslim League and turned trustworthy of the League's leadership. From there, they leaked the plans of the National Guards and other Muslim militias to the RSS leadership with great confidentiality.⁸¹

There are various examples of the *swayamsevaks* who worked as spies. A *swayamsevak* named Om Prakash of tehsil Pathankot became an RSS spy in Lahore to gather knowledge of the Muslim activities. He got himself employed in the shop of a Muslim

81. Interview with Vishwanath.

sweet maker (*halwai*). He stayed at his shop, ate there and slept there. Slowly he came in contact with the National Guards volunteers who used to visit that shop. He started taking part in the meetings and soon established himself as a staunch League worker. He divulged much important information to the RSS and while doing one such job, was arrested. He came to India after the partition when the prisoners from both the sides were exchanged.⁸² Similarly, there was the case of a small boy from Lahore named Inderjit, who was studying in eighth standard and was a *swayamsevak* of Ramnagar area of Lahore. He was assigned with the duty of spying the Muslims of Navankot who had accumulated weapons and armaments for attacking the Hindus. So for this purpose, he, one day, tore his clothes, sat on the Lahore railway station and started shouting, "I am coming from Amritsar, Sikhs have killed my parents, I want to go Navankot to my relatives but I don't know them, so please help me." The National Guards people took him to Navankot with them and kept him at their office there as an orphan. After staying there for three-four days he came back to Lahore, as National Guards were unable to find his relatives. On his arrival at Lahore, he went straight to Harbans Lal, head of spy department and divulged all the information gathered by him. Then Harbans Lal, with the help of the Dogra regiment, raided the place of the weapon accumulation and hatched the plan.⁸³

Likewise, in Rawalpindi, when the communal disturbances started in March 1947, various *swayamsevaks* were assigned the job of spying. There were the examples of Gurbachan Singh and Dina Nath Chhabra of Malout, Raj Kumar Arshi, Kulwant Rai, Daulat Ram

82. M.C. Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

and Vijay Kumar of Muktsar. Regarding Gurbachan Singh, it was said that he was fond of reading detective novels and after coming in contact with the RSS in 1946; he was assigned the job of spying. For this purpose, he got himself circumcised, learnt reading *namaz* and acquainted himself fully with the Islamic practices. He became a disciple of one Ataullah Khan, a *zamindar* of Malout, and learnt some religious tricks from him and thus became popular among the Muslims by performing healing cures for the common ailments. Gradually, he became a Muslim *faqir* by donning the green robe, leaving his hair and beard untied. In this guise, he roamed various places of the western Punjab, which among others included Lahore, Peshawar, Gujrat and Jehlum. He collected important information regarding the activities of the Muslims and some times took photographs and posted them to Gyan Chand Shastri of Ferozepur who was the district *pracharak*. Similar was the case of spy Raj Kumar Arshi of Muktsar who was a musician, actor and singer. He became *Sangh's* spy after coming into contact with this organization. He learnt Arabian and Persian from a *moulvi* and turned Mhd. Sharif from Raj Kumar Arshi. He was sent to Rawalpindi with his other associates namely Kulwant Singh, Daulat Ram and Vijay Kumar. He took many photographs of the atrocities committed by the Muslims in Rawalpindi which later on featured in the book, '*Rape of Rawalpindi*', of a Congress leader from Gurdaspur district, Prabodh Chandra named. According to the RSS sources, Arshi, even after the partition, went to Pakistan several times and helped Indian army in recovering the abducted women from Sialkot and Peshawar.⁸⁴

Procurement of the arms: The arms and weapons form an important

84. M.L.Virman, Volume-4, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-128.

requirement for any para military organization. This was equally applicable to the RSS. In their struggle against other communal groups, the RSS people fully used the weapons, which ranged from knives, spears, swords, lathis (sticks), iron rods, revolvers, guns, rifles, hand grenade, crude bombs and country made ammunition of all sorts. Now the big question arises, from where the RSS got these firearms and bombs, though swords and spears were readily available. There were many instances, which depicted the methods used by the RSS in procuring its arms. As it was well known that during the partition, the point of contact for the *swayamsevaks* was the house of G.C.Narang in Lahore. All the secret meetings, regarding the plan of action and the procurement of the arms, were held at this place. In other local offices of the RSS, arrangements had been made for safety and contacts. In these secret offices, torches having white, green and red light were arranged; horns of the fire brigade were procured; motorcycles, jeeps, cars and cycles were also made available in these offices for any kind of use.⁸⁵

The firearms and the bombs, many a time were procured from the neighbouring states. Madan Lal Virmani, who was the *pracharak* of village Rampur in district Multan, sent some of the trusted *swayamsevaks* to Kota state of Rajsthan from where they brought rifles and revolvers. Similarly, the neighbouring states of Bikaner, Patiala and Kapurthala too served as the reservoir for procuring arms. Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan of the Frontier Province were the important places from where the crude weapons could be easily procured. Arms making had, in fact, assumed the shape of a small-scale industry in those days. Many *swayamsevaks*

85. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

were repeatedly sent to these border areas for purchasing arms. Women too, many times, brought arms from these places as they were least suspected by the police. In the eastern part, the main centre for buying arms was Dehradun in the United Provinces. Besides this the princely states in U.P. and C.P. regions too aided them. As already mentioned Balvir Sharma who was incharge of the RSS in Abohar, had his contacts in the princely state of Bikaner. He was assigned the duty of bringing arms across the border and dispatching them in the jeeps towards Lahore where Vaid Om Prakash Dutt was the receiver. From the central office of the RSS at Lahore, these firearms were then distributed to various branches of the RSS in Punjab.⁸⁶ There were also the examples where armymen sympathetic to the RSS or due to their earlier association with it, helped the *Sangh* people in getting arms at right prices. One, Captain Ram Prakash who earlier was the student of M.A.O. College, Amritsar and after joining the army was posted at the Peshawar cantonment where he assisted youth of the RSS who went to Peshawar and to the nearby tribal areas for purchasing arms.⁸⁷ The government reports also recorded that some RSS workers of the Muktsar branch of Ferozepur district were reported to have been attempting to obtain arms from the neighbouring areas.⁸⁸

Besides arming themselves with the weapons, the RSS had several other equipments which were equally essential for war like purposes. These essential commodities included jeeps, trucks, motor cycles, cycles, fire brigade vans, hospital vans, telephones,

86. Interview with Balvir Sharma.

87. M.C. Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

88. Home Political Department 9, File No.18/7/47-P-87-101, Report on the situation in the Punjab for the Second half of July, 1947, NAI, New Delhi.

torches, army uniforms, water pumps, petrol cans, *etc.* At Amritsar office of the RSS, there were four fire extinguishers which they had bought specially from Bombay. For the injured and wounded they had an elaborate arrangement of first aid boxes. Jeeps, trucks, army uniforms, high intensity torches were first procured stealthily from the army disposal markets and then repaired for use. In fact, the arrangements were so elaborate that for doing these specialized duties separate departments in the RSS were set up. The money was never a problem for purchasing these articles. It flowed from all the quarters of the Hindu society (Sikhs included) even from those who were the non-RSS people. The rich merchants, *arthiyas*, shop keepers, professionals and even politicians were among the donors.⁸⁹

Along with the procurement of firearms through buying, the RSS had also taught its *swayamsevaks* to manufacture bombs at their own places. There was even an instance where the *swayamsevaks* of Rhodes in district Sialkot had developed a country made cannon.⁹⁰ In Kabirwala tehsil of district Multan, bombs and country made guns were manufactured. The government also reported the crude bomb making activities of the RSS in the Doaba region.⁹¹ Similarly, in Hoshiarpur, the bomb-making factory was established in a house. Apart from making bombs, its training was also imparted to the *swayamsevaks* who then were dispatched to different places to manufacture bombs.⁹² The bomb making was the profession fraught with all sorts of risks. The *swayamsevaks* too, several times fall prey to accidents during this pursuit. In Pakpattan tehsil where Vishwanath

89. *Ibid.*, p. 306 and also interview with Balvir Sharma, Vishwanath and Dinanath.

90. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, pp. 105, 106.

91. Home Political, File No.18/7/47-P.87-101, NAI, New Delhi.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

was the *pracharak*, an accidental blast took place in the bomb making factory of Batra, the tehsil *sanghchalak*. Here Vishwanath and Madan Lal (*karyavah*) got seriously injured.⁹³ Similarly, Chajju Ram, who had been to Peshawar from Sukhochak (district Gurudaspur), was injured in a blast during bomb making.⁹⁴ In June 1947, Bihari Lal Kathpal of Muktsar, while manufacturing bombs in a house at Fazilka, met with an accident and lost his arms. In Muktsar in July 17, under the guidance of Narender Singh while manufacturing a bomb Harbans Lal was injured, fatally.⁹⁵

The training for the effective use of the firearms and bombs was as important as procuring them. For this purpose, the RSS used its offices, *akharas*, and if the weapons were heavy like bombs then open spaces like banks of the rivers, dry khuds, semi hilly terrains and fields were used. There was an example of Lahore where the training for using pistols and the bombs were given in the *Khuds* adjoining river Ravi.⁹⁶ In the town Sukhochak of district Gurdaspur, bomb testing and its training was done at night on the bank of river Bei.⁹⁷ From the Okara branch in the Montgomery district, some members of the *Sangh* had even gone to Hardwar to attend a camp, and in Rohtak, workers received the training from an instructor who had recently returned from Nagpur. Another camp where the training was imparted was held in Kapurthala state.⁹⁸ Even during these trainings and testings many accidents were occurred. On April 2, 1947, at Hindumalkot, while getting training for using bombs; Hansraj, Kewal

93. *Ibid.*, P.156 and M.L.Virmani, Volume 3, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

94. Interview with Chajju Ram.

95. M.L.Virmani, Volume-3, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

96. M.C.Vajpayee and S.C. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 338.

98. Home Political Department, 9, File No.18/7/47-P.87-101, NAI, New Delhi.

Krishan, Faqir Chand, Ram Prakash, Kundan Lal got wounded. Likewise, Prem, the pracharak of Nihalkheda, tehsil Abohar, got injured and lost his hand while practising with his pistol whose barrel suddenly exploded.⁹⁹

In Abohar, while taking training under Balvir Sharma of using tommy guns, an accidental shot made the explosives catch fire in which a *swayamsevak*, Hansraj Kamboj, died.¹⁰⁰ Discipline and quick mindedness were the hallmarks of these training programmes and arms manufacturing pursuits. The dedication and loyalty towards the organization was upheld in every situation. In the above mentioned incident, when police came to inquire about the accident, Hansraj recorded that he caught fire by the bursting of a gas lamp.¹⁰¹ Likewise, the incident of Hoshiarpur as mentioned earlier, was camouflaged by burning incense sticks (*agarbatis*), cleaning the floor, and setting up tabla, harmonium, *etc.* to show as if some religious programme was going on. So the police was befooled by the *swayamsevaks* many times by these ways.¹⁰² The discipline was the foremost priority of the *swayamsevaks*. They obeyed the orders of their superiors without ifs and buts and with no skepticism. Even during the arms procurement and their training they hardly questioned the logic underlying it.¹⁰³

So, the nature and the logic of the violence that RSS resorted to in the days of the partition had its rationale embedded in the circumstances of those times. From the various examples cited in

99. M.C.Virman, Volume-3, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 132.

100. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

101. *Ibid.*

102. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 87, 88.

103. Interview with Balvir Sharma.

the preceding pages, it was amply clear that in the territories where the Hindus and the Sikhs were in lesser proportion, their work ranged around the protection of their lives and providing for safe evacuation. They could hardly be on an attacking mode as both the logistics and the ground situation were unfavourable to them. This was precisely the case in west Punjab where the government agencies were out and openly communal with most of the times siding with the Muslim rioters. In order to avoid any direct confrontation with the regime, it complied silently with the government directives. Therefore, when on January 24, 1947 the RSS and the National Guards were declared as unlawful bodies by the Punjab government, the RSS submitted to the order and allowed its premises to be searched and locked up. On the contrary, the National Guards adopted refractory attitude and offered resistance.¹⁰⁴

The attack is the best form of defence and the RSS too practised it in the areas where its bench strength was the maximum, its sympathisers were vocal and its opposition timid. These were the areas of central and eastern Punjab where the RSS along with the active support of the Sikh *jathas* broke mayhem upon the opponents. The government reports also mentioned that the RSS workers had taken part in the communal disturbances as the partition drew closer. Further one of the reports said that in Kaithal and Karnal districts the Hindu community had been urged by the RSS people to be armed and they had promised them the procurement of the same for the purpose of attacking.¹⁰⁵ However, the RSS was not alone in preaching the cult of violence and practising it. The Sikh *jathas* who were working in

104. G.D.Khosla, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

105. Home Political Department 9, File No.18/7/47-P.87-101, NAI, New Delhi.

tandem with the RSS were equally belligerent and many times more furious than the RSS in raiding the Muslims. The Hindu deputy commissioner of Jalandhar said that some times he was virtually powerless before the local Sikh 'committee of action' and, at times, their attitude was even insulting towards the Hindus.¹⁰⁶ But the fact remained that the RSS was participating with the Sikhs in attacks on the Muslims. The killings of Amritsar were a case in point.¹⁰⁷ But again it should be emphasized here that the Hindu and the Sikh offensive was started only after the disturbances of Rawalpindi in the month of March. And the Amritsar killings were the direct outcome of the Hindu and the Sikh retaliation to the doings of the Muslims in Lahore.

It was not that only Hindu nationalists were supporting the activities of the RSS during the partition. There were evidences of the silent, moral and material support to the RSS from the politicians, other than the Hindu nationalists. The 'iron man' Sardar Patel had his blessings on the RSS.¹⁰⁸ This proved all the more true during the ban on the RSS after the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Sardar Patel was instrumental in the revocation the ban in 1949 after his long correspondence with Golwalkar. The Congress politicians from Punjab namely G.C.Narang and Bhim Sen Sachar too, morally, supported the activities of the RSS. They, even at times, demanded their help in protecting the Hindus and even their own families. The meeting place of the RSS leaders in Lahore, as said earlier was the bungalow of Gokul Chand Narang.¹⁰⁹ During the relief operation for the refugees,

106. "Sir Francis Mudie to Jinnah", I.O.R. MSS. Eur F164/14, cited in Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 530.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 532.

108. Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 532.

109. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

this house served as the store for daily necessities and even arms. Even G.C. Narang had enquired from the *swayamsevaks*, staying in his bungalow, if they had acquired some arms.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Radha Krishan Seth, a Congress leader of Amritsar too praised *swayamsevaks* in front of Nehru when the former's four daughters were saved by the RSS men from the goons of the National Guards.¹¹¹ There was also an instance of Bhim Sen Sachar, who later on became the chief minister of Punjab, demanding the RSS help when the situation in Amritsar and Lahore went out control and the Muslim League was having a hay day.¹¹²

The mainstream government, inspite of individual and scattered sympathies of the political leaders, was wary of the RSS way of functioning. This was true even in the modern times when the non-BJP parties were in power. The government report for the second half of the July 1947 stated, "(...) the organization's activities also have a criminal character. In Gujranwala city some members have been advocating retaliation with violence for the recent murder of Niranjana Dass Bagga (...) In Jehlum and Rawalpindi, local branch workers have been trying to persuade members of the Hindu community to remain where they are and prepare themselves against the aggression (...) there is no doubt that the belief of the RSS in the creed of violence is as strong as ever".¹¹³

RSS and the Relief Work in Punjab:

In the wake of partition and the continuous influx of

110. Telephonic interview with Bhai Mahavir, New Delhi, October 3, 2006. Also see August 15, 1992.

111. Kirpal Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 308, 309.

112. Interview with Vishwanath.

113. Home Political Department 9, File No.18/7/1947, P.87-101, NAI, New Delhi.

refugees from western Punjab, the relief of the Hindu and the Sikh migrants was now on the top of the RSS agenda. At that time for the riot sufferers' assistance, there were two bodies working in Punjab. The first was 'Punjab Relief Committee', which was constituted by the Punjab RSS and the other one was 'Punjab Danga Pidit Sahyta Samiti', which was formed by the Indian National Congress. In the beginning, these two committees worked in tandem with each other, often supplementing each other's efforts. But soon the chinks appeared between the two. The reason behind was the insistence of the Congress to provide relief to both the Hindus and the Muslims, whereas the RSS was adamant on helping only the Hindus and the Sikhs, though at times, it helped the Muslims also, but those were exceptions. The RSS here was of the view that in this whole mayhem the Hindu was the victim and the Muslim, an aggressor.¹¹⁴

The Punjab Relief Committee had been formed in March 1947 *i.e.* before the partition itself because the riot victims had started pouring in since the beginning of 1947, as the reality of Pakistan seemed quite imminent to them. The victims from western Punjab, leaving their homes and hearths and taking whatever they could take but still being robbed on the way, were arriving at Lahore where both the government and the private agencies, which included Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharam Sabha and gurudwaras, were engaged in the relief operations. But the individual and the scattered efforts for the relief work were not yielding enough results as the count of the refugees was increasing day in and day out. As for the government agencies though the efforts were being made but the real ground work was absent. Most of the time the government leaders were engaged in

114. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

appeals to the people through newspapers and radio, which had some effect but not the desired one. Moreover, at times, the government officials used the government machinery and the relief material collected for their individual self *i.e.* for non-relief purposes.¹¹⁵ Therefore, in the case of Punjab, various private agencies came under the umbrella organization called 'Punjab Relief Committee' with the RSS at the helm of its affairs. The scout work, which was earlier assigned to the RSS boys by the government, now paved the way for full time effort on their part. It was also because of their disenchantment with the government attitude, with the passage of time; many Congress workers too joined Punjab Relief Committee.¹¹⁶

The Punjab Relief Committee was organized under the guidance of Punjab *prant pracharak*, Madhav Rao Muley who was instrumental in its establishment and also in the opening of its branches in various districts of Punjab. The *prant sanghchalak* Badridas was made its president and Gokul Chand Narang its treasurer.¹¹⁷ In the beginning, its office was opened at Ratan Bagh in the Bunglow '*Shree*' of (*Diwan*) Krishan Kishore (Lahore). Two camps were set up in Lahore, one opposite to the Lahore railway station and the other in the Aror Vansh Hall. But later on, as the work increased, the office was shifted to the big bunglow and sugar mill of Gokul Chand Narang in Lahore.¹¹⁸ The bunglow of Gokul Chand Narang was chosen because it was big enough to store the relief material and to house *swayamsevaks* who were approximately 100-150 in number,

115. Interview with D.P.Gupta at Moga (retired principal of A.B. College Pathankot) September 2, 2007.

116. Interview with Brijmohan at Amritsar, August 12, 2007.

117. M.L.Virman, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 57.

118. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

working and staying there during the relief operations. During the daytime, apart from these full timers, many *swayamsevaks* from Lahore's colleges too came there for helping in the relief work.¹¹⁹ The basement of the bungalow was quite spacious and, therefore, was used for dumping relief material of which food grains formed the bulk.¹²⁰

Mode of Working:

The RSS, for accumulating relief material for the refugees, banked upon its vast *shakha* network spread in the various parts of the Punjab. The *swayamsevaks* in the various *shakhas* collected different items of every day use including necessities, from the people, directly. They sometimes appealed to the people through newspapers for donating whole heartedly for the riot victims. For that purpose they even got the plight of the refugees published in the newspapers depicting various hardships faced by them *viz.*, women who didn't have milk to feed their babies, lack of clothes and so on. The main theme behind this was to generate enough sympathy for the refugees so that people might not shy away from help. Sometimes, the *swayamsevaks* and the RSS leaders used their contacts in pursuance of these objectives and many a time succeeded in getting good amounts from the upper sections of the society.¹²¹

The similar type of appeals were published in Hindustan Times, The *Tribune*, *Akashvani*, *Pratap* and other national and vernacular newspapers where in it was stated that how Hindu Sahyata Samiti was engaged in the relief work. Along with this, it was also mentioned how *swayamsevaks* engaged in the relief work were endangering their lives and working in far off areas. Further, it was

119. M.L.Virman, *op. cit.*, P.57.

120. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

121. Interview with Chajju Ram Sab.

said that scores of trucks loaded with foodgrains, utensils, clothes, blankets, *etc.* were continuously, being dispatched to the various relief camps from the central camp in Lahore. But still hundreds of refugees were continuously pouring in daily that required immediate attention. There was also the reference of 'Punjab Relief Scouts' in these appeals. It was the offshoot of the Punjab Relief Committee assigned with the work of rescuing men, women and children from the riot-torn areas. The youth of this group were also helping the army in recovering those girls, women and children who were abducted and forcibly converted to Islam. It was appealed by the RSS that more and more youth should join this organization which was also working for those Hindus who were falsely implicated in various cases and who were provided with succour in the form of their free advocacy in the court of law.¹²²

The members of the Punjab Relief Committee while doing their bit themselves, was also exhorting different sections of the civil society to earnestly come forward to the help of their beleaguered brethren. These exhortations were quite often, responded positively to and aid in all forms poured in. The people whole heartedly, donated food consisting of chappaties and vegetables, which *swayamsevaks* collected from door to door. Along with it, pitchers, fans, utensils, milk, biscuits, medicines, clothes were also donated by them. Taking those collected food items, these *swayamsevaks* arrived straight at the railway station and other places where the refugees were arriving through different means. These refugees were fed with all sorts of foodies, which was more than enough for them and the leftover was sent to the nearby *gaushalas*.¹²³

122. M.C.Vajpayee & S. Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

123. Interview with Chajju Ram Sab.

The sphere of work of the RSS with the passing time and according to the increasing needs was expanding. The other jobs performed by it, apart from taking care of the needs of the refugees and serving them with food *etc.*, were rescuing Hindu women, children and the old from the riot struck areas and sending them to relief camps, organizing attacks on the Muslim aggressors, taking the wounded to the hospitals and making arrangements for their treatment, cremating the dead bodies, making arrangements of the fire brigades for dousing fire, petitioning for the government help for the refugees, endeavouring for providing some sort of job to them and guiding them in the law courts about the proper legal procedures and even providing them free legal help. For all these supplementary and complementary works the Punjab Relief Committee had formed different departments assigned with particular type of work. These were:

- a) Collection department - meant for collecting different items ranging from food to money.
- b) Service department - for taking care of refugees and providing them with all types of relief.
- c) Transport department- for arranging vehicles for performing various duties *i.e.* rescuing refugees, transporting them to the safer areas, bringing and sending relief material to different camps and so on.
- d) Cremation department- for arranging cremation of the dead bodies, claimed and unclaimed.
- e) Fire brigade department- for quick response to the fires that were set on in various Hindu areas and rescuing people from there.
- f) Medical department- that provided medical aid to the victimised sick and wounded refugees.

- g) Legal department- for assisting refugees in legal procedures for claiming the properties left over, disputes, cases regarding abduction and recovery of women *etc.*
- h) Propaganda department- meant for publishing the news regarding the refugee plight and other problems, thereby garnering sympathy and help from the different strata of the society.
- i) Last but not the least, there was the department for another important activity which was meant for any rescue or contingency situation. The *swayamsevaks* in this department were readily available to meet any exigency arising out of the current situation. One Harbans Lal was the leader of this group and this department had trucks, jeeps, motorcycles, *etc.* at their disposal.¹²⁴

The hostels of D.A.V. college and Sanatan Dharam college, Lahore, were the bastions of the *swayamsevaks* who indulged in these activities. There was one instance regarding the activities of student residents of the D.A.V. college hostel who were involved in the secretive missions of offence, defence and rescue. As this job performed by the students was always veiled but, inspite of all precautions, the hostel warden, Ashirwadi Lal Srivastava, (famous historian) came to know about the activities of the students. Feeling a sense of duty and responsibility regarding the guardianship of the students he complained to the principal Goverdhan Lal Dutta (who later on became the vice-chancellor of Vikram University, Ujjain). The principal had a silent sympathy with the students and knew that the *swayamsevak* students were doing social security work which was

124. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

the need of the hour and therefore, advised professor Srivastava to close his eyes towards these developments. This instance of Lahore D.A.V. college shows that even those people who were not directly involved in the RSS work had hidden sympathy towards its cause.¹²⁵

D.A.V. college, Lahore was the main refugee camp in Punjab and was also the central office of the Punjab Relief Committee. The whole college premises were converted into an asylum for the refugees who were coming from the western parts of Punjab. According to the RSS sources, there were around 30,000 refugees in that camp. This camp continued its operations till all the refugees were safely sent to Amritsar, but not before November 21, 1947. Along with the *swyamsevaks* there were official people from the government side who were appointed in the camp. The head of the government officials was one Babu Brij Lal, who was the refugee officer.¹²⁶ There were two chief liaison officers appointed by the government of India, namely, Mehta Ramrattan and Lala Nathu Lal.¹²⁷ But with the consent of the RSS men who were already engaged in the relief work Chunni Lal, senior RSS personnel was appointed as honorary head of the camp. There were approximately 100 *swyamsevaks* appointed by the RSS who were working in tandem with 12-13 liaison officers. Each of these liaison officers was given the charge of individual district and the prominent among these were Lehna Singh and legislator Sita Devi. The lists of the refugees were prepared by Chunni Lal and his aides who, after thorough investigation, passed these to the liaison officers. Thereafter, the groups were sent to locate the lost and abducted people for which

125. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

126. Telephonic interview with Bhai Mahavir.

127. M.C.Vajpayee and S. Paradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

armymen were helped by the *swayamsevaks*.¹²⁸

The activities of the RSS were not limited to the relief work alone. They were also instrumental in saving the valuable books of the D.A.V. college library. Mehar Chand Mahajan, who was also putting up in the same camp urged the higher RSS officials to transport the books safely to India which was at that time a difficult task, as the means of transportation were limited and those too were meant only for carrying refugees and their belongings. But, inspite of that, the RSS officials assured him of their efforts and if possible, promised him to accomplish the task. The keys of the library were handed over to Chunni Lal, the head of the camp. As, it was well known, the two libraries of the D.A.V. college, namely College library and Hansraj library had rich collection of the books but their count running into several thousands made hard the task of their dispatching to India securely. But at last a plan was made and in the careful execution of the scheme, the books and the hand written transcripts was stealthily, packed into the empty grain and ration bags. But again the problem cropped up as the numbers of bags were less and the books were more. Therefore, approximately 2000 bags meant for carrying the luggage of the refugees too were brought into use. With every convoy the books were transported and dispatched safely to the Arya Samaj Mandir, Lohgarh, in Amritsar. After a few days, another call was made to the *swayamsevaks* by *Acharya* Vishwabandhu (an Arya scholar and leader) to bring the books from their library, which was housed in the hostel building of the D.A.V. college. This job too, was executed with utmost care as the work of putting books in the bags was performed in the night to save time and to avoid any undue

128. *Ibid.* and also an interview with Bhai Mahavir.

publicity and gaze. Similarly, the turn of the college clock came and this was the hallmark of that institution. It was, therefore, decided to transport it to India along with the '*kalsh*' of the Arya Samaj Mandir. The clock and the *kalash* were carefully brought down and with the help of the military were dispatched to the D.A.V. college, Jalandhar, where these were handed over to Meher Chand by Chunni Lal Kapoor himself.¹²⁹

Important Relief Camps Established by Punjab Relief Committee:

As the number of refugees coming from western Punjab was increasing continuously, therefore, to meet the need, the Punjab Relief Committee started opening its branches in other areas of eastern Punjab. M.L.Virmanani of Vishwa Samvad Kendra, Jalandhar has compiled the list of important relief camps which operated under the auspices of the Punjab Relief Committee. These camps functioned in various districts of Punjab and their brief description is given as under:

- A) **Amritsar:** Apart from Amritsar city, the other camps operating in various other towns of Amritsar district were abuzzing with hectic activity. The important towns in this district which sheltered these camps included Trantaaran, Patti, Khemkaran, Khalada, Attari, Ajnala and Dera Baba Nanak. Though, administratively, Khemkaran was under Lahore district and Dera Baba Nanak was under Gurdaspur but the RSS for the convenience of its relief operations had brought these two places under its district head office of Amritsar. The working of these camps was managed from Amritsar but few were managed from Trantaaran as well. According to the RSS

129. Written recorded interview of Chunni Lal Kapoor by M.L.Virmanani. Kapoor is presently staying at Shahadra in Delhi.

records at Trantaaran, approximately, 35,000 people took food daily. Apart from food, the refugees were provided with clothes and some times with money. The government was also providing help to this camp, though the majority of the funds poured from the society itself. These camps continued their operation for approximately, three months. In the Khemkaran camp, the RSS rescued and sheltered many Hindus who were caught up in the Pakistan villages. In this regard, the help of army was also sought who, along with the relatives of the abducted and the *swayamsevaks*, saved many people mostly women from Pakistan. Here the name of Rattan Chand, the manager of Elumbry Company was worth mentioning who provided the jeeps and trucks of his company to the RSS for the relief work.¹³⁰

- B) **Gurdaspur:** The office of the Punjab Relief Committee was opened in the grain market of Gurdaspur. There were around 4000 refugees in this camp and they were provided with meals and shelter. The people of the city were benevolent in their help. This camp functioned for fifteen days. From the government side another camp was opened in the Islamabad *mohalla*, a predominantly Muslim locality, but by then, was deserted by the Muslims who had migrated to Pakistan. The government provided those (refugees) with rations comprising mostly of *atta* and *dal*. Similarly, at Dhariwal the relief camp was functioning and was catering to the needs of the refugees coming from Nangewal and Shakargarh. Similarly, another refugee camp in Gurdaspur district was functioning at Batala in

130. "R.S.S. Records at the RSS Archives", Amritsar.

which around 1000 refugees took food and other necessities of daily use.¹³¹

- C) **Hoshiarpur:** The work of refugee relief in Hoshiarpur district was in the hands of Kailash Nath, the RSS pracharak of the district. In the beginning when the rush of refugees was scarce, the district unit of the RSS, on its own, provided them relief material. But as more and more people started pouring in the local RSS's own resources started diminishing. Therefore, for the purpose, Kailashnath arranged a meeting with the notable citizens of the town and appealed to them for maximum possible help. The appeal was in the name of the Hindu *i.e.* it was the duty of the Hindus to help their co-religionists as the main reason behind their sufferings was the fact that they were Hindus and therefore, they were forced to migrate leaving their homes and hearths. The RSS expected that well to do people of the town should contribute at least Rs 500 and the proposal which was accepted gladly. With the corpus of the fund collected by the people, the regional office of the Punjab Relief Committee was formed and the relief work was started. Durgadass, famous philanthropist of Hoshiarpur, was made the president and Manohar Lal Sood, the secretary of the committee. Hoshiarpur was receiving the flush of refugees mostly from Mianwali district. A band of *swyamsevaks* was deputed at the railway station who was assigned with the task of bringing refugees to the camps in the trucks arranged for ferrying. The meals for the refugees were prepared in the *sarai* of Lakshmandass, in the Mandi area. There was a special

131. *Ibid.*

provision of the children and the diseased, which were provided with milk and medicines. One of the *swayamsevaks* who was a doctor himself was giving his services round the clock. Later on, the main office of the Punjab Relief Committee was opened in Bhama Beg Ki Mandi.¹³²

- D) **Ferozepur:** The district of Ferozepur was one of the most important districts of the Punjab due to its proximity with the Pakistan border. In Ferozepur city, approximately 35,000 people were provided with meals daily. Along with this, from every house to feed the migrants, the *swayamsevaks* collected 5 to 10 chappatis. These thousands of chappatis were then loaded into the jeeps and distributed among the hungry. The whole process of food management was divided into three parts; first was flour kneading which was assigned to the women folk; second was to bring and collect chappatis from house to house which was mostly with the *bal swayamsevaks*; and third was the distribution part. The food was prepared twenty four hours a day. In Ferozepur city, the *swayamsevaks* who had migrated from western Punjab provided valuable help in the whole process of refugee relief. In Ferozepur cantonment too, similar kind of work was undertaken. The chappatis were collected at the cantonment railway station and from there these were transported to the two relief camps in the city area, where one *langar* was opened at the grain market where every day, for 15 days, food was continuously prepared. Around 25,000 people were given utensils, 200 blankets and 2000 earthen pitchers. The sick and orphans were provided with medicines. The

132 *Ibid.*

arrangement for the cremation of the dead bodies like cloth and wood was also made in this camp. Also 20 people were given jobs in the different departments.¹³³

E) **Abohar:** As an important tehsil of Ferozepur district, in this town the relief committee was formed as early as in April 1947. Most of the refugees coming to this town were hailing from the Muslim princely state of Bahawalpur. Here, around 40 *swayamsevaks* were engaged in the relief work. Elaborate food and shelter arrangements were made and those who wanted to move further were provided with the railway fare. Everyday food for around 30,000 people was prepared in Abohar town. On similar lines, in other parts of the Ferozepur district, relief measures were undertaken in full swing. The main places were, Fazilka where 30,000 people were catered, Moga 7000 people, Zira 3000, Talwandi 3000, Muktsar 7000 (arrangements in this town were made in the gurdwara itself), Jalalabad 3000 and Guru Harsahai Mandi 3000. The *langars* at these places lasted from 7 to 20 days after which the rush of refugees started decreasing. Also by this time the government too took big chunk of work in its hands and the *swayamsevaks* now started working under the government directives.¹³⁴

F) **Jammu:** Apart from various areas in Punjab, the Punjab Relief Committee had also opened its branch in Jammu under the presidentship of Prem Nath Dogra, *sanghchalak* of Jammu and Kashmir. In Jammu region, the migrants were coming from the districts of Gujrat, Rawalpindi and Sialkot. From March 15 to October 10, 1947, the Punjab Relief Committee helped

133. *Ibid.*

134. *Ibid.*

approximately 3 lakh people in one way or the other. About 200 families were resettled and Rs 50,000 was given to make them self reliant. At that time, from Jammu upto Kathua, 20 camps were functioning. In these camps 3 lakh rupees, 50,000 clothes, 10,000 utensils and medicines worth Rs.1000 were distributed. A noteworthy aspect of the relief work in this area was the assistance given to approximately 30,000 Punjabi Muslims on Kathua border. The provision of tea and food was made for them. In the J and K region the *swayamsevaks* from district Sialkot and tehsil Shakargarh of district Gurdaspur played a noteworthy role.¹³⁵

The relief work of similar quality but different in quantum was going on simultaneously in different cities and towns of the Punjab e.g. Jalandhar, Pathankot, Madhopur, Ambala, Jind, Gurgaon and Delhi. The odds were always there at several steps, still the RSS, at least at this stage point of time was performing a laudable task. This was even acknowledged by Mridula Sarabhai, who was appointed by the government of India for the operations relating to the rescue of women in Punjab. She while visiting one of the relief camps in Trantaaran was much influenced by the social service and disciplinary accumen of the *swayamsevaks* and promised them government assistance. She also presented a letter of recognition (*prashasti patra*) to the Samiti.¹³⁶

Mahatma Gandhi's Assassination and Ban on the RSS: 1948-49.

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on the evening of January 30, 1948 by one Nathuram Vinayak Godse. He was an ex-RSSite who later on deserted it in the favour of the Hindu

135. *Ibid.*

136. M.C.Vajpayee and S.Pradkar, *op. cit.*, p. 47

Mahasaba.¹³⁷ It has been said that at the time of Gandhi's assassination he was editing a pro-Hindu Mahasabha newspaper in Pune.¹³⁸ It was these antecedents of Godse that forced the government to suspect the involvement of both the Mahasabha and the RSS in the murder plot and to seize the control of the government. As nowadays, earlier also, the RSS was the favourite whipping boy of the opponents and so the government crack down was quick and stern. The leaders of both the groups were arrested. On February 3, 1948, M.S.Golwalkar was arrested and the government banned the RSS the very next day. It was declared an unlawful organization and banned as the first step towards combating 'forces of hate and violence' (emphasis added).¹³⁹

The RSS decided not to resist the ban orders and so even before his arrest, Golwalkar had instructed the RSS functionaries to cease all the RSS activities, temporarily. Despite this instruction and the subsequent ban, large number of *swyamsevaks* continued to meet together under the guise of study groups, sports associations, devotional assemblies (*kirtan jathas*), etc. As the regular *shakhas* were not conducted, these guised groups served the purpose of regular contact and further policy chalking. The RSS people, while meeting together in the form of these groups, were at considerable risk, because the government was quickly arresting those suspected of participating in the RSS activities.¹⁴⁰ The prominent RSS personnel at all the levels of the organizational hierarchy were arrested or detained at their places. Those who escaped the government wrath

137. Ashis Nandy, *At the edge of Psychology*, OUP, Delhi, 1980, 1993 (reprint), pp. 70-98. In these pages an elaborate psychoanalysis of the thinking of Mahatma Gandhi and Nathuram Godse is depicted.

138. W.K. Andersen and S. Damle, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

139. *Times of India*, Delhi, February 5, 1948.

140. Interview with Vishwanath.

underground themselves, creating a brief lull in the overt activities and a void in the leadership scenario of the organization.

The RSS sources estimated that approximately 20,000 *swayamsevaks* were arrested for different time spans during the earlier months of the ban.¹⁴¹ Quoting The *Hindustan Times*, A.N. Bali¹⁴² said that as many as 10,000 persons were, immediately, arrested in the country after Mahatamaji's assassination, thereby establishing a world record of arrests following a political murder. A mass hysteria overtook the non violent Congress workers and supporters and, according to the government's own admission in the parliament, as many as 1000 houses were burnt or razed to the ground, hundreds of people were killed and injured in Maharashtra and the rest of the country. Even the *samadhi* of the *Sangh* founder at Resham Bagh in Nagpur was not spared by the Congress mob. Apart from the direct arrests there were 'preventive' arrests of the *sanghis* that is, the arrest of unknown people who had not broken any law but 'might break law'. Lists of the government employees suspected to be in sympathy with the RSS was prepared and all such employees were dismissed from the government service.

The ban on the RSS attracted mixed reaction from the Indian press. The *Statesman* welcomed the ban and emphasized on similar treatment to the other organizations of the similar ilk.¹⁴³ The *Civil and Military Gazette* viewed that the government was intending to ban the RSS as early as in November 1947.¹⁴⁴ The *Times of India*,

141. The figures are mentioned in an RSS publication, *Shri Guru ji, The Man and His Mission: On the occasion of his 51st Birthday*, Bharat Prakashan, Delhi, 1956, p. 37

142. A.N.Bali, *Now it can be Told*, Akashvani Prakashan, Jullundur, 1948, pp. 141, 142.

143. *Statesman*, Delhi, February 6, 1948.

144. *Civil & Military Gazzete*, Lahore, February 5, 1948.

as such, adopted a neutralist stance. But most significant was the attitude of *The Tribune* which took up the issue and, in a charged editorial, accused the Nehru government of political vindictiveness.¹⁴⁵

The newspaper said,

"The Nehru Government's position will be clearly questionable and untenable if it forges deadly repressive weapons and uses them freely against political parties and organizations which happened to be opposed to its national and internal policies and moves (...)"¹⁴⁶

So the newspaper openly questioned Nehru government's impartiality and its policies of attacking parties whose outlook is different from its own. And the *Organiser*, the mouth piece of the *Sangh*, naturally, took up fight on its behalf. It condemned the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi but absolved the RSS of the charge.¹⁴⁷

The Indian prime minister had the visceral hatred for the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha and in one of his speeches at Amritsar he accused the RSS and Mahasabha of harming Indian interests.¹⁴⁸ So the Congress leaders from the very beginning were having a lot of problems with the RSS. Even the moderate Rajendra Prasad was unhappy with the turn of the events and talked about the provocative behaviour of the Mahasabhites with Mookerjee.¹⁴⁹ The only probable succour for the RSS in the government was Sardar Patel who was charged even by his party men for having a soft corner for the RSS

145. *The Tribune*, Lahore, February 6, 1948.

146. *Ibid.*

147. *Organiser*, July 29, 1948.

148. *Pakistan Times*, January 30, 1948, cited in Raghuvendra Tanwar *Reporting the Partition of Punjab 1947: Public and Other Opinions*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 578.

149. *Ibid.*

and the Mahasabha.¹⁵⁰ He even went on assuring the RSS leadership that if they began to behave properly in a balanced manner, then he could even become their advocate while dealing with the senior Congress members.¹⁵¹ But in the wake of Gandhi's murder, even the sympathizers like Patel could not save the RSS from being banned as the majority Congress opinion was against them as was the government machinery.

However, the government was unable to show any involvement of the RSS in the Gandhi's murder and also its involvement in any sort of conspiracy to overthrow the government. The then home minister of India, Sardar Patel, who was also the incharge of the investigation, responding to Nehru's charges, that Gandhi's murder was "a part of much wider campaign organized chiefly by RSS", said, "It (...) clearly emerges that (...) the RSS was not involved at all. It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha directly under Savarkar that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through".¹⁵² By August 1948, most of the detainees were released and Golwalkar himself was released on August 5. But the ban was not lifted. Golwalkar was required to remain within the municipal limits of Nagpur and to refrain from addressing any public meeting.¹⁵³

The release of Golwalkar provided RSS with the

150. For details see, Kewal Chand Punjabi, *The Indomitable Sardar: A Political Biography of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel*, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1962.

151. *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, January 9, 1948.

152. Patel's letter of February 27, 1948, responding to Nehru's February 26 letter, cited in Durga Dass (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence : 1945-1950 Volume-6*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1973, pp. 56-58.

153. The various restrictions were mentioned in the RSS pamphlet, *Justice on Trial: A Collection of Historic letters Between Shri Guruji and the Government (1948-1949)*, Prakashan Vibhag, Mangalore, 1958, pp. 69, 70.

opportunity to approach prominent leaders in the government and to persuade them to lift the ban. He earnestly started correspondence with the prime minister Nehru and the home minister, Patel, on the question of lifting the ban on the RSS.¹⁵⁴ In a letter dated September 24, 1948 he (Golwalkar) wrote to Nehru denying the existence of any evidence linking the RSS with Mahatma's murder.¹⁵⁵ In another letter to Patel, on that very day, he wrote and reiterated, "Since the ban on the RSS, the youth had begun to lean more and more towards communism (...) I for one feel that if you, with the government power and we, with organized cultural force, combine we can soon eliminate this menace. I am intensely worried at the waves of victory of that foreign 'ism', which are sweeping our neighbouring countries."¹⁵⁶ But this bogey of the communist danger did not affect Nehru and he was not prepared to trust. Even the more sympathetic Patel insisted that the RSS should stop creating unrest in the country. In a letter dated on September 11, 1948, he wrote to Golwalkar regarding his views and concerns, '(...) that opposition to the Congress and that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of the personality, decency or decorum had created a kind of unrest in the country'. He proposed in the same letter that, 'the RSS men can carry on their patriotic endeavour only by joining the Congress and not by keeping separate and opposing'.¹⁵⁷ Beside these exchange of letters of the RSS leaders with the government and its vigorous appeals, the RSS turned to other methods in its pursuit to pressurize the government to lift the ban. On the other hand, Patel was canvassing the provincial governments on the ban issue but attitude of the state governments was anti-RSS and,

154. *Ibid.*

155. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

156. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-26.

157. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

therefore, against the lifting of the ban. So no immediate progress in this regard was made.

The travel restrictions on Golwalkar were eased for a brief period in October 1948, so that the RSS chief could confer with the government in Delhi. But Pandit Nehru refused to see him when he was at Delhi. After the termination of these fruitless talks, the RSS chief was detained again. Soon after, he made two press statements whereby he addressed chiefly those folks who wanted the RSS to play a political role. In his another address he stated,

"I believe that cultural work should be entirely free from political scramble and should not be tagged to any political party."¹⁵⁸

And for the people with political leanings, he cautioned,

"This position is unbearable and does no credit to those who may hold it".¹⁵⁹

The Delhi provincial organizer Vasant Rao Oke reacting to Patel's suggestion of merger of the RSS with the Congress said in a press statement, "The advice was too queer and unreasonable to be termed a proposal for change".¹⁶⁰ The mounting discontent in the RSS vented in the form of launching of the signature campaign which carried the signature of approximately 9 lakh people. The RSS formed Janadhikar Samiti or People's Rights Committee to muster and mobilize public opinion under the chairmanship of J.B. Kriplani.¹⁶¹ Irritated Golwalkar with the government's delay tactics now decided to line up with the activists of the RSS on the ban issue. It was

158. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-82.

159. *Ibid.*

160. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-87.

161. Interview with Ram Singh. Kriplani was respected veteran Gandhian and a Nehru critic.

decided by the RSS Kendriya Karyakari Mandal *i.e.* central executive committee (highest decision making body of the RSS) to resume the RSS activities *i.e.* to defy the government ban orders which they had earlier decided to comply with. P.B. Dani, the RSS general secretary, was made incharge of the new course of action. But due to his arrest Eknath Ranade and Madhav Rao Muley were directed to lead the movement.¹⁶² So finally, the first *satyagraha* (civil disobedience movement) was launched on December 9, 1948.

Ban and *Satyagraha*: The Punjab Sphere

The echo of the ban and the forthcoming *satyagrah* was loud and clear in Punjab also. By the virtue of its being the strong bastion of the RSS, the government whiplash was severe and so also the resulting civil disobedience. All the important functionaries were arrested or detained. The state head office of the RSS and the district offices were shut. The property of the *Sangh* was attached and its publishing material, books, journals, pamphlets were confiscated. Many *swayamsevaks* undergrounded themselves to evade arrest. Like at the national level, in Punjab also, the RSS as an organization was disbanded and regular *shakhas* were suspended. But the *swayamsevaks* continued to meet and assemble in the form of various social, sports and cultural associations so as not to earn the government's ire. The RSS *sanghchalak* of Punjab Badri Dass condemned Gandhi's assassination and declared the suspension of the RSS activities for the entire duration of the mourning.¹⁶³

The regional Congress leadership of Punjab was even anticipating the ban on the RSS and the Akali Dal much earlier to restrict their activities. But the motive of the government could not

162. Telephonic interview with Balramji Dass Tandon.

163. *The Tribune*, Ambala, February 4, 1948.

materialize because of the apprehension that such an action would lead to a public agitation against the government.¹⁶⁴ So, one aspect of the RSS in Punjab during those years was clear that it enjoyed widespread support and sympathy of the Punjabi Hindus and that was primarily due to its good work during the partition as mentioned earlier in the chapter. Further, to counter the increasing RSS clout among the people and its anti Congress leanings, the east Punjab government planned to raise a force of 13,000 men, trained for the specific tasks on the lines of the RSS with '*sare jahan se achha*' as its anthem.¹⁶⁵ However, this plan could not see the daylight and was abandoned.

In the aftermath of Mahatma's murder, widespread demonstrations against the RSS started in Punjab on the lines similar to those taking place on the national sphere. At Amritsar, Jalandhar and other places one particular group of leftists took out a procession and held meetings crying blood for blood.¹⁶⁶ They were obviously trying to make a capital out of the tragedy, the same report stated. Also there were the slogans calling to avenge the death of Mahatma Gandhi.¹⁶⁷ The Sikh leader Master Tara Singh however adopted pro RSS approach and appealed for peace and restraint and cautioned that this vengeful attitude of the opponents could lead to dangerous consequences and far reaching effects. He also said that if the RSS was undesirable it would die its natural death.¹⁶⁸

However, even prior to the Mahatma's assassination, as told earlier, the anti-RSS atmosphere was building up among the

164. Raghuvendra Tanwar, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

165. *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore December 31, 1947.

166. *The Tribune*, Simla, February 5, 1948.

167. *Ibid.*

168. *Ibid.* *Statesman*, Delhi, February 11, 1948.

ruling circles. Regarding the Hindu and the Sikh nationalists Nehru reportedly had said, "a few groups in Punjab have made it their profession to murder people (...)"¹⁶⁹ He was referring to the massacre of the Muslims during the partition. It was also said that in Punjab, without doubt, the trouble was planned by the RSS and the Akali Sikhs and it was the RSS plan to seat its own men at important positions.¹⁷⁰ While naming those men, the report said, "(...) it wants Bakshi Tek Chand as Governor and Rai Bahadur Badri Dass as Premier (...) in Delhi the RSS and the Akalis were running a whispering campaign that Nehru and Azad be removed".¹⁷¹

The RSS, however, was not without sympathizers and the rulers without critics. The Nehru government was accused of pressurising the East Punjab government to ban the RSS and the Akalis. *The Tribune* on November 26, 1947 said, "(...) that Nehru wants the RSS and the Akali Dal to be banned and disbanded and has issued a directive to the East Punjab Government (...) it is amazing that while the existence of far flung Muslim League organizations in India with their secret arsenals do not cause the slightest irritation to Panditji, the existence of the RSS and the Dal which function as massive bullwarks against internal Pakistani sabotage cause acute pain and anger to him".¹⁷² *The Tribune* further pleaded the case of the RSS and the Akalis and said, "(...) but for the gallant resistance offered by these national organizations, thousands more of Hindu and Sikh women would have been raped or slaughtered (...) their valiant members cheerfully laid

169. Dawn, Lahore, November 27, 1947.

170. *Ibid.*

171. *Ibid.*

172. *The Tribune*, Simla, November, 26, 1947.

down their lives (...) What we want to emphasize is that the RSS and the Akali Dal are the protectors of the people (...) Jinnah is building up his National Guard but Nehru, instead of building up a powerful citizen's defence force and absorbing the RSS and the Akali Dal, is thinking of smashing it." ¹⁷³

So, in other words, the Congress since independence and prior to the assassination of Gandhi was strategizing to clamp down the RSS, believing it as its prospective political competitor. The mounting pressure on the Punjab government to ban the RSS however, was fraught with serious implications for the Congress as it did not want to be charged for political vindictiveness so it decided to club it with other paper organizations *viz.* Punjab Frontier Force, Congress Seva Dal, Desh Sewak Sena. ¹⁷⁴

After the failure of all negotiations with the government the RSS adopted the same method that the Congress had always been adopting in its struggle with the opponents. But the *satyagraha* of the *Sangh* took only the mild shape of going about in processions, holding meetings and so on. According to A.N. Bali who was the non sanghite witness to this movement said, "It was utterly unlike the Congress methods of organizing *sayapa* parties or fasting at the doors of their opponents or shouting offensive slogans like 'Todi Bacha Hai Hai'. The *satyagraha* of the *sanghies* was a commendable example of gentlemanliness and complete non violence. They just technically disobeyed the laws and courted arrests". ¹⁷⁵

Some Examples of the RSS *Satyagrah*:

In Punjab, the police was reportedly cruel and merciless

173. *Ibid.*

174. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1947.

175. A.N.Bali, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

when it came to dealing with the *satyagrahis*. They (*satyagrahis*) were lathicharged and many a times were thrown into the ice cold water of the canals in the months of December and January. So due to these sufferings the RSS people nostalgically felt that it was them who only a few months back, protected thousands of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan. They further remembered that many Congressmen requested them to protect their lives and they always yielded to their entreaties and made no difference in helping and saving them. But during the ban and the *satyagraha* these very people, they viewed, were in the forefront of the government crack down.¹⁷⁶

Except district Kangra of Punjab, the government repression was severe everywhere else. At Amritsar's Company Bagh a huge *satyagraha* was organized. Recalling the whole incident, an RSS veteran told the scholar,

"It was Sunday and as a preemptive measure the government had appointed 250 policemen at the Company Bagh when the local unit of the RSS had decided to launch the *satyagraha*. Apart from policemen the crowd of approximately 10,000 people had also assembled there. At 6:00 p.m. *satyagrahis*, wearing garlands, pierced the police cordon and started shouting slogans. The local senior superintendant of police who was coming back after playing tennis was unaware of this possible development because before going he was confident of his arrangements in dealing with the *satyagraha*. But when he saw the whole scene, he burst into anger and started beating the *swayamsevaks* with his racket and ordered police for the lathi charge. The *satyagrahis* were severely beaten and loaded into the police trucks. By seeing the condition of the *satyagrahis* the crowd

176. Interview with Satpal Kaka.

which by this time had gathered in a big count started moving in a procession towards the stage of action. So at last, due to the mounting public pressure, the lathi charge was stopped. The public was calmed after the assurance given by the rehabilitation minister, Sardar Pratap Singh. Even then, the public anger was not subsided and at one place in Amritsar they (public) encircled a group of 4-5 policemen but they were saved by 15-20 *swayamsevaks* who were earlier participating in the *satyagraha*".¹⁷⁷ Similarly on February 10, a procession of young boys marched through the streets of Amritsar protesting against the ban.¹⁷⁸ In many cases unable to stop the RSS activities and arrest those underground *swayamsevaks*, the police in Punjab started cooking up cases and framing the families known to have links with the RSS. There was the case of a school boy named Lal Chand who was caught pasting posters in Amritsar and to frame his family a weapon was planted in his home and the family was booked.¹⁷⁹

In PEPSU at Patiala, which normally remained insulated from political upheavals, the *satyagraha* was launched by the *sanghchalak* Dilip Chand and his three sons,¹⁸⁰ along with the *sanghchalak* of Sangrur Kaluram *Vakil*, *sanghchalak* of Narwana Kulwant Rai, *sanghchalak* of Bathinda Pritam Singh and many other senior RSS functionaries. Here also police came down heavily upon the *satyagrahis* because it was doubted that this *satyagraha* was also an attempt to pressurize the regime for their merger into the bigger state of Punjab. Here the *Sangh pracharak* of Patiala Sri Chand was severely beaten. A young college boy, Vinay Kumar, who happened to

177. Interview with Vishwanath.

178. For details see *The Tribune* issues of 7, 9, 10, 11 February, 1948.

179. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1948.

180. One was Jitender Vir Gupta who later on became the chief justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court.

be the son of local station head officer was also among the *satyagrahis*, was beaten and kept in the jail for three days. This clearly showed the amount of pressure on the police to quell the disturbance.¹⁸¹

The *satyagrahis* made every effort to popularise their cause among the people so that the sympathy could be generated and, ultimately, used for pressurising the government. There was an incident of Shimla where a *jatha* of *satyagrahis* chose a cinema theatre for propagating their cause and to vent their grievances. Amidst the movie show, they stealthily emerged on the stage, started shouting slogans, and then discoursed on the issue and after singing RSS songs and prayers, returned. In Jalandhar, when *satyagrahis* were brought to the court they started shouting slogans and when the judge objected to this, the leader of the *jatha*, Agyaram, urged him to remove their hand cuffs which was readily accepted in order avoid further nuisance. A *jatha* from Ludhiana went to Delhi for the *satyagraha*. They staged their dharna in front of the Lok Sabha when the MPs were coming out of the parliament. In order to clear the way, the police started loading them in the police truck only to find them laying on the road. One of them started giving lecture on the whole ban issue. In the ensuing jam, the home minister Sardar Patel's car was also struck and could not move till the end of the lecture which Sardar too listened patiently.¹⁸²

The repression of the police was quite stern at this point of time when the world's largest Hindu cultural organization indulged in the civil disobedience nation wide. At Amritsar, the police resorted to a novel method. They loaded *satyagrahis* in the truck and released

181. M.L.Vajpayee, *Pratham Agni Pariksha*, New Delhi, (n.d.), pp. 125, 126.

182. *Ibid.*

them near the Indo-Pak border in the dead of the night knowing the fact that the area was highly insecure and sensitive. Similarly, in the same district, police again resorted to an extraordinary method. They, while taking *satyagrahis* from Amritsar to Attari, planted drunkard goons on the way assigned with the job of thrashing the RSS men whom police had planned to drop mid way. The result was the same, and as expected, the *swayamsevaks* were badly beaten but still managed to come back to Amritsar and again started *satyagraha* the next day after taking appropriate medication.¹⁸³

In the modern district of Nawanshahar police came up with a cruel method of dealing with the *satyagrahi* menace. In the bitter cold of December, they were first beaten and then loaded in the truck, taken to the canal on the out skirts of the town, were bared, forced to lay on chilled sand on the canal side where they were again beaten. They were tortured till they became unconscious. In Raikot and Bathinda, the *satyagrahis* were thrown into the canal's chilling water. In Ambala district the *satyagrahis* were denuded and left in the forest 18 miles away from the city and the locals were also warned not to help them. In Muktsar (district Ferozepur) the RSS leader of the *satyagraha*, Ram Lal Taneja, was beaten bare bodied and when he became unconscious was dragged towards the anthill. In order to stir the ants water was showered on it. The *satyagrahis* were bitten by the ants and when they tried to protect themselves from the bite the police hit them with the rifle butts.¹⁸⁴

As there were large scale arrests all over India, Punjab was no exception. The Punjab government had marked three jails (main, apart from the district jails) for keeping the RSS *satyagrahis*.

183. Interview with Vishwanth.

184. M.C. Vajpayee, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 127.

These were:

- (i) Yol camp jail (where the *satyagrahis* from Delhi were kept).
- (ii) Ferozepur camp jail.
- (iii) Bostol jail, Hisar.

In these jails the *satyagrahis* were lodged beyond capacity. As the number of *satyagrahis* courting arrest increased, several other jails of the state were also filled. The RSS men from Patiala state were kept in Patiala, Sangrur and Bathinda jails, whereas the prisoners from Himachal region were put in Suket and Mandi jails. As the jails were stuffed beyond their capacity, the civic and sanitary conditions of these turned worse. Against the maltreatment meted to them in the jails, the *satyagrahis* decided resorting to hunger strike. In Punjab on December 17, the first token hunger strike was made. But there was no marked effect on the authorities as the result which in the different jails, hunger strikes were started on different dates and for indefinite period. Normally, these strikes lasted for 5 to 12 days. At last the jail authorities agreed to the demands of the prisoners and after an assurance, the strike was taken back.¹⁸⁵

But things went the other way round and the promises made to the *satyagrahis* were not kept. Therefore, the resentment again started cropping up among them and the idea of jail *satyagraha* was again floated. But the senior leaders still were not in the favour of taking any drastic step and so they adopted a wait and watch policy. But till March 1949 no step was taken by the authorities to improve the jail conditions. And therefore, once for all, it was decided by the prisoners to resort to hunger strike again and not to end it even after any sort of assurance, and in case of non-acceptance of their

185. *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 182 and also interview with Balvir Sharma; Vishwanath, Ram Singh and Vaidya Avtar Krishan.

demands, only their dead bodies would be taken out from the jails. A notice of demand and ultimatum was given to the government mentioning demand and dates of hunger strikes.¹⁸⁶

The first hunger strike till death was started in the Amritsar jail on March 15. On March 21, the *seh prant pracharak* of Punjab, Ram Singh, followed it in the Yol camp jail with his 60 inmates.¹⁸⁷ Within ten days, the RSS *satyagrahis* of Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Hisar, Ambala, Ferozepur and Gurdaspur jails too swung into action and the hunger strike took the shape of a statewide movement with ever increasing numbers. But as the time passed, the condition of the *satyagrahis* started deteriorating. Many of them got afflicted with various diseases like dysentery and mental disorders. But still the jail authorities were not impressed and after every two, three days milk was forced by the pipe through the nose of the *satyagrahis*. Even in these types of conditions the prisoners were handcuffed and chained. But this inhuman treatment was stopped after the Citizen's Rights Committee intervened.¹⁸⁸

The condition of the *satyagrahis* in the various jails of the state was turning worse. The jail authorities again resorted to inhuman methods by throwing those prisoners out of the jail premises whose condition could not be improved by the jail doctors. There were the incidents in Ferozepur and Yol cantonment jails where the diseased *satyagrahis* were chucked out. In the Yol cantonment jail, a *satyagrahi* whose body temperature was 95⁰ F was thrown out in the cold. This treatment by the authorities was criticized by the newspapers. Citing the example of Yol cantonment jail daily *Pratap*

186. *Ibid.*, p. 182

187. Interview with Ram Singh.

188. *Ibid.*

said, "There are 300 people in the jail who are on hunger strike. Out of these, 25 prisoners were in serious condition. The succour given by the authorities is meagre. And if this situation persisted, the jail will turn into a mental asylum".¹⁸⁹

The heat of the movement was also felt outside the jails where women folk of the prisoners started a stir in order to shake the authorities for improving the lot of jail inmates. Even the members of the ruling Congress government started pressurizing their leaders behind the scene. The regime change at this moment which threw the mantle into the hands of Bhim Sen Sachar provided some silver lining in the dark clouds. But he was also reluctant to take any direct action at the cost of him being accused of as a *Sangh* sympathizer.¹⁹⁰ In this political tug of war, at last the government retreated. It was declared that matriculate prisoners or the prisoners with Rs 100 monthly income would be given B-grade facilities. Therefore, 40 days unprecedented hunger strike ended on a triumphant note. This was possibly a lone example of mass hunger strike and that too for a record period. Bhai Mahavir wrote in *Organiser* that they (prisoners) didn't only go on hunger strike but created a history. In the world, there was no other example of a mass hunger strike involving 1200 people for 40 days.¹⁹¹ The contagious effect of these hunger strikes soon transferred to other parts of India. There were lathicharge in Agra and Buxar jails to 'pacify' the prisoners. A similar incident happened in the Ferozepur jail where inspite of earlier promise jail authorities didn't improve the living conditions. The prisoners were given one inch, thick gram flour *chapatis*, which were making the inmates chronically sick by stomach ache and dysentery. On

189. *Pratap*, Jalandhar, April 28, 1949.

190. M.C.Vajpayee, *op. cit.*, 184-185.

191. *Organiser*, November 9, 1949.

November 28, 1949 when all the medicines in the jail were exhausted without providing any relief to the prisoners, the agitation was started. The slogan, '*nara-e-doctor-hai-dawai*' was repeatedly shouted. The whole agitation was quelled by severe lathi charge. Though, at the end of the day, the jail superintendent apologized for the happening.¹⁹²

Nehru government, except Sardar Patel, was working overtime to liquidate the RSS. Gopi Chand Bhargava, the Punjab premier while assuring Nehru reiterated his commitment to contain the RSS.¹⁹³ The sycophancy and the biasness of the Punjab government was clearly discernible when the same Bhargava himself stated to Nehru, prior to the ban on the RSS, that he had met Badri Das (*sanghchalak* of the Punjab RSS) to discuss his appointment as vice-chancellor of the Punjab University.¹⁹⁴ But after the assassination of Mahatma the Punjab premier backed off and even assented the ban on the RSS. The government's unfriendly attitude towards the RSS was even questioned by the Gandhian Jai Prakash Narayan, who was astonished how the Congress could ban the RSS without applying the same charge of communalism on the Akalis, with whom they had electoral understanding in Punjab.¹⁹⁵ However, the attitude of Patel was of unabated neutrality even at the want of supporters in the party. He while advising Bhargava said that they should also take action towards other private armies *viz.* Desh Sevak Sena and Akal Sena.¹⁹⁶ The Sikhs of Punjab, however, had a soft corner for the RSS. Their spokesman Tara Singh said that implicating innocent men and organizations will not please Gandhi's soul,¹⁹⁷

192. Interview with Dina Nath.

193. Durga Das (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 30-40.

194. *Ibid.*

195. *Statesman*, Delhi, February 21, 1948.

196. Durga Das (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

197. *The Tribune*, Shimla, February 13, 1948.

obviously referring to the RSS.

In spite of an all out effort by the Nehru government to drag the RSS into Gandhi's murder case, the whole government exercise ended in a fiasco. The whole case was dealt by the special court of justice, Atma Charan. This special court was established on May 4, 1948, its hearing started on May 27, statements of the witnesses were recorded from June 24 to November 6, the arguments were made from December 1 to 30 and on January 10, 1949 the judgment was announced. The judgment was recorded in 110 pages, which exonerated Veer Savarkar and the RSS from Gandhi's murder conspiracy. Nathu Ram Godse and Narayan Apte were given death penalty and five others were given life imprisonment. Even after 19 years of Gandhi's murder the government didn't stop smelling a rat in the case. The whole case was again reopened and was given to the "Kapoor Committee" for re-investigation. The Committee submitted its report in 1969. The most important evidence in this report was the statement of R.N.Banerjee, who was the central home secretary at the time of Gandhi's murder. He, in his statement, said that it was not proved that those (culprits) were the members of the *Sangh*. They were even dissatisfied with the activities of the *Sangh*. They considered sports, physical exercises, *etc.* activities of the *Sangh* as futile. They believed in more extremist and violent activities.¹⁹⁸ The report of the Committee further added that there was no evidence in Delhi, which suggested the hand of *Sangh* in the murder of Mahatama Gandhi and other senior Congress leaders.¹⁹⁹

197. The Tribune, Shimla, February 13, 1948.

198. Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Conspiracy to murder mahatma Gandhi, (Kapoor Committee Report) Volume-1, Government of India, 1969 p. 165.

199. *Ibid.*, Volume 2, p. 66.

In spite of being exonerated by the three courts (though last one was in 1969), it was always believed in the Congress circles regarding the culpability of RSS in the murder of Mahatma. After a series of negotiations, both open and secret, (the negotiators and mediators included several non political persons, notably among them was businessman G.D. Birla, who arranged meeting of Eknath Ranade, the member of the RSS central executive committee at former's house in Mussorie)²⁰⁰ The ban was, ultimately, lifted on July 11, 1949, which facilitated the subsequent release of Golwalkar from the prison on July 13, 1949. It was agreed upon by the RSS to draft its written constitution thereby to end its secretive character. The draft of the RSS constitution was prepared by Mauli Chandra Sharma, Eknath Ranade and Deen Dayal Upadhaya (who later on played an instrumental role in the foundation and functioning of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh). The draft of the constitution after getting a positive nod from Golwalkar was published. However, there were still some contentious issues on which the RSS refused to compromise *viz.* participation of preadolescents in the *shakhas* and the selection of the *sarsanghchalak*. After his release from the prison, Golwalkar was asked regarding the deal on which his straight forward response was that the 'RSS had given up nothing'.²⁰¹ He was accorded warm welcome at its headquarters in Nagpur where he again reiterated that there was no compromise undertaking of any kind given to the government.²⁰² This was followed by Golwalkar's country wide tour

200. W.K. Andersen and S.Damle, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

201. Justice on Trial, *op. cit.*, Appendix 15, p. 102.

202. *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 103 (He said, "The government of India may be right from its point of view in what it has said in its *communiqué* on July 12, 1949 lifting the ban on RSS but I can assure you that I have done nothing by word or mouth or in writing which is derogatory to the principles of self respect of the RSS organization.")

from August 1949 to November 1949 in which his rallies witnessed massive crowds. This was clearly suggestive of the fact that inspite of various upheavals the RSS still had large following and thus was a force to reckon with.

Praja Parishad Movement:

Before starting off with the role of the RSS in the Praja Parishad Movement, it would be prudent to have a brief synoptic view of RSS's role in the accession of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian union. All this began with the meeting of Guru Golwalkar with Hari Singh; the ruler of J and K. Golwalkar, to meet the ruler reached *Srinagar* by air on October 17, 1947 and stayed at *Srinagar* with (barrister) Narinderjeet Singh's in-laws. (Narinderjeet Singh was the *sanghchalak* of U.P.). He was related to *Dewan* Badri Das, the *sanghchalak* of the Punjab RSS. Both Narinderjeet Singh and *Dewan* Badri Das were quite close to the ruler and were the aides of the RSS chief in his talks with the ruler. During his meeting with Hari Singh, Golwalkar was accompanied by the *prant pracharak* of Delhi Vasant Rao Oke and the *prant pracharak* of Punjab Madhav Rao Muley, the *vibhag pracharak* of J and K Jagdish Abrol was also with them. On the next day *i.e.* on October 18, Golwalkar had a meeting with the maharaja at his 'Karan Mahal'. He was welcomed by both Hari Singh and Tara Devi, (the king and the queen). The details of that meeting, however, were not available as Golwalkar alone met the Maharaja while all other RSS officials were kept out of that meeting. Before leaving, Golwalkar asked Maharaja to stay at *Srinagar* so that the morale of the people remained intact but advised him to send young Yuvraj (Karan Singh) to Jammu. On October 19, before returning, in his meeting with the RSS officials, he instructed them to provide all possible support to the Maharaja. On the same day in the evening, he addressed a meeting of 500 *swayamsevaks* at the D.A.V. school near

Lal Chowk. The important RSS officials who were present in this meeting included Balraj Madhok, Kedarnath Sahni, Bhagwat Swaroop, Omkar Nath Kak (pracharak Anantnag), Avtar Krishan Kav (pracharak Baramula), Mukhan Lal Ama (*pracharak* Srinagar), Devki Nandan Nakhari (later on became the p.a. of Mookerjee) and many others.

Before Golwalkar, Badri Das too had a meeting with the ruler earlier in July 1947, concerning the accession of J and K with India. But that meeting was a failure though the RSS's influence and, particularly, that of Golwalkar was even acknowledged by Sardar Patel who messaged him for his personal meeting with the Maharaja. Pandit Premnath Dogra and justice Mahajan too were instrumental in the arrangement of this historical meeting. Golwalkar, after this meeting, acquainted Sardar Patel with the whole situation. It may, therefore be, said that this meeting of Guru Golwalkar with the Maharaja of J and K, if not to a large extent, but still to some extent was the catalyst in the accession of the state with India.

Genesis of the Praja Parishad Movement:

On October 26, 1947, J and K was fully acceded to the Indian union but some points of contention remained, the appointment of Sheikh Abdullah as the prime minister of the state and his resultant high handedness was one of them. The then Indian prime minister, Nehru was known for his soft corner towards Sheikh *vis-à-vis* Maharaja. The Kashmir centered outlook of Sheikh had alienated the people of Jammu region who were predominantly Hindus. Therefore, for the analysis of the political conditions of the state, a meeting was organized in Jammu at the residence of Prem Nath Dogra on November 7, 1947. In this two days' meeting, a party named Praja Parishad was launched. The notable participants of this meeting were Madhav Rao Muley, Pandit P.N.Dogara, Jagdish Abrol, Balraj Madhok, Kedarnath Sahani, Bhagwat Swaroop, Om Prakash Mengi, Sehdev

Singh, Hansraj Sharma and some others.²⁰³ Therefore, the Praja Parishad we can say, was an ideological extension of the *Sangh* in Jammu and most of its activities were concentrated up to the Pir Panchal ranges.²⁰⁴ A majority of its members were from the RSS and, therefore, the Hindu nationalistic world view of the RSS was quite discernible in the organization of this party which later on took the form of a movement.

The genesis of the Praja Parishad movement was facilitated by the special status given to J and K. Their demand was the full accession of J and K with the Indian union sans any special status. The sore point in the eyes of the Praja Parishad was the concept of separate constitution for J and K. They, therefore, demanded one flag, one president and one constitution and so coined the slogan - *ek nishan, ek vidhan, ek pradhan*.²⁰⁵ Although the Praja Parishad was formed by the group of the dissident RSS workers led by Hansraj but later on the RSS fully dominated the movement by virtue of its organizational strength. The allegedly communal rhetoric of the RSS in other parts of India took the form of regional nationalism here. The people rallied around this party simply because it promised to rid them of what was called the Kashmiri domination.²⁰⁶ Therefore, in this movement the Sikhs and the Muslims of the Jammu region also took part in their opposition to the Kashmiri majoritarianism.

Started as party, Praja Parishad took the form of a

203. Maharaj Krishan Bhavati and Upender Krishan Bhatt, *Sri Guruji Aur Jammu-Kashmir*, Sri Guruji Janamshatabdi Samaroh Samiti, Jammu-Kashmir, 2006, pp. 13, 14.

204. Verinder Grover (ed.), *The Story of Kashmir : Yesterday and Today-2*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1995, p. 446.

205. Interview with Baldev Singh, ex-M.P. Kathua, at Kathua (J and K), on June 10, 2007.

206. Verinder Grover, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

movement after the arrest of Pandit Dogra along with his four other associates in 1948. Pandit Dogra was a prestigious leader in the Jammu region, who earlier served as the deputy commissioner of Anantnag and, therefore, his arrest provided necessary fuel to the movement.²⁰⁷ Now the concern of the Praja Parishad was directed to secure the freedom of Pandit Dogra and his associates. So they were released due to the popular pressure. The immediate motive of the Praja Parishad was fulfilled and therefore, its momentum got toned down till 1949 when these leaders were once again arrested. The agitation was started again but fizzled out when due to the fear of arrest, its leader Roop Chand Nanda tendered a written apology.²⁰⁸ For the third time, the movement again gathered strength when some students of NSA (National Student Association) objected to the hoisting of National Conference flag over the Prince of Wales college Jammu.²⁰⁹ After the 35 day hunger strike by the students, supported by the RSS, the government backed out.²¹⁰

The Praja Parishad which was started as a local party for small time objectives of local importance now turned out to be a phenomenon having its echo heard in the corridors of Delhi. Pandit Premnath Dogra, the leader of the movement and *sanghchalak* of J and K RSS, provided third big thrust to the movement when he along with his aides courted arrest on November 21, 1951.²¹¹ He was 75 years old at that time. *En-masse* arrests were courted at various tehsil and district headquarters. The properties of many activists were

207. Interview with Chaggar Singh, former Chairman TAC Kathua, at Kathua on June 10, 2007.

208. *Ibid.*

209. Verinder Grover, *op. cit.*, pp. 446, 447.

210. Maharaj Krishan Bhavat and Upender Krishan Bhatt, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

211. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

confiscated.²¹² According to one of the activist of the movement, nearly 100 people were daily arrested during the hay days of the movement. The activists, after their arrests, were taken to the jails, first in Kathua, Jammu and, ultimately, to *Srinagar*, the bastion of Abdullah.²¹³

Declared Objectives of the Praja Parishad Movement:

The movement got support from the masses of the Jammu region after declaring its professed aims. So those so far were unacquainted with the movement now started supporting it and they were broadly the Hindu masses. Its objectives were:

1. Full and final accession of the state to India.
2. Abolition of 'special status' to Jammu and Kashmir.
3. One president, one flag and one constitution for the entire nation including Jammu and Kashmir.
4. Ending of the policy of discrimination against Jammu and Ladakh, and the Hindu minorities.
5. Dismissal of Sheikh's government.

And still later when Article 370 was applied to J and K according it a special status, Praja Parishad included its abrogation in the subsequent agitations led by it.²¹⁴

The third phase of the Praja Parishad movement lasted for about eight months. During this phase about 15 activists of the movement were killed in the firing and lathi charge by the security

212. H.V.Sheshadri, *RSS: A Vision in Action*, Bangalore, Jagrana Prakashan, 1988, p. 42.

213. Interview with Om Prakash Wazir at Kathua on June 12, 2007; He was an activist and suffered jail imprisonment during the movement.

214. *Praja Parishad Party Documents* at Veer Bhawan, Jammu and also H.V.Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 41, Maharaj Krishan Bhavat and Upender Krishan Bhatt, *op. cit.*, p. 14, besides interview with Baldev Singh.

forces. ²¹⁵ During the movement, there was complete press censorship. To stop people coming from the 'Indian side', permit system (*parwana*) was applied and whosoever wanted to enter Jammu and Kashmir, had to obtain this from the deputy commissioner of Gurdaspur district (Punjab). ²¹⁶ The entry was made from the Lakhanpur barrier (starting point of J and K on the bank of river Ravi which was the border between J and K and Punjab) and only after the showing of the permit the visitors were allowed to enter J and K. In order to protest against this obnoxious law BJS (whose 90% cadres were the RSS men) started agitation under the auspices of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, the then BJS president. ²¹⁷

Role of Punjab RSS in the Praja Parishad Movement:

It is interesting to note that even though the Praja Parishad movement was generated in J and K for its demands and by its people, the contribution of Punjab unit of the RSS was conspicuous and so could not be undermined. The logistical support that the movement got from Punjab was no less than those who actually participated in the movement. As we know the backbone of the movement in J and K was its state unit of the RSS and most of the leaders were the office holders of the *Sangh*. So it was, but natural that the Punjab RSS didn't lag behind in its overt and covert support. The Punjab *prant pracharak* of the RSS Madhav Rao Muley was the central figure that with the dictates from the central leadership was organizing the whole gamut of operations. Besides him, the individual *swayamsevaks* from Punjab, particularly, the Pathankot tehsil of

215. Maharaj Krishan Bhavat and Upender Krishan Bhatt, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

216. Interview with Chaggar Singh.

217. Interview with Chajju Ram Sab.

Gurdaspur district, were quite instrumental in supporting the movement.²¹⁸

Although, the Praja Parishad was started in J and K in November 1947 but the support from the RSS quarters of the Punjab started pouring for it simultaneously. As the stringent laws of J and K were in force and, therefore, the items detrimental to the then regime of the state were completely prohibited. But the chinks were made in the government's prohibition exercise. For example, the newspapers containing news items against the government were secretly smuggled from Punjab by the RSS men in the border district of Gurdaspur.²¹⁹ Further, as the movement progressed, in 1949 a tragic firing incident occurred at *Hiranagar* tehsil of Kathua district wherein two simultaneous conferences were being organized. One was of the National Conference (the ruling party of Sheikh Abdullah) and another was of the Praja Parishad activists. Due to widespread sympathy gained by the movement the latter was attended by the people in good number, so the government was disturbed. In order to curb the activity government authorities resorted to lathi charge and fired tear gas. The gathered crowd got frenzied due to this high handedness on the part of the government and in the resultant firing to control the mob two people got killed. One was Bihari Lal Sharma, a resident of the nearby village and other was Bhikham Singh, a resident of *Hiranagar* town itself. The police in order to save its skin and further to prevent the situation from inflating ferried those dead bodies in truck to a village called Basantpur on the bank of river Ravi to secretly cremate them at night.²²⁰ This whole exercise was done to

218. Interview with Chaggar Singh.

219. Interview with Om Prakash Wazir.

220. Chajju Ram Gupta, *Amar Shahid Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee*, Janhit Kalyan Samiti, Pathankot, 2007, p.5. Also, interview with O.P. Wazir.

protect the government from obvious embarrassment as whole India was closely watching the situation. This was, particularly, true about the central government leadership and, particularly, by the deputy prime minister Sardar Patel who was chagrined by changing the charge of J and K state from home ministry to the external affairs ministry in 1948.²²¹

The RSS unit of Jammu and Kashmir sent a secret message to its Punjab unit about the incident and further informed that the bodies had been taken by the police towards the Punjab border. As the village Basantpur was on the bank of river Ravi and so in the nearest Punjab village Shahpur Kandi (site of Ranjit Sagar Dam and on the other bank of Ravi) the *swayamsevaks* were made vigilant regarding the suspicious activities on the J and K border. The *swayamsevaks* of Shahpur ultimately got news from the Pathankot *vibhag* of the RSS regarding the arrival of dead bodies and their possible cremation in Basantpur in the pitch dark night. The news proved true and so the duty to bring those bodies from Basantpur was assigned to the *swayamsevaks* of Shahpur. The strategy was to display the bodies to the masses and the leaders' upto Delhi so that the real face of the Sheikh government might be exposed and the public support and sympathy for the movement could be garnered.²²²

The task of bringing the bodies was assigned to Sansari Lal Mahajan and his six comrades.²²³ Sansari Lal who was having good knowledge of swimming swam across the river leaving his associates on the other bank as they were inept at it and were also

221. H.V.Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

222. Chajju Ram Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Also interview with Baldev Singh, Chaggar Singh and Om Prakash Wazir.

223. Interview with Sansari Lal Mahajan, on June 15, 2007 at Shahpur Kandi, now staying at a temple in the same town.

afraid of possible presence of the police on the other side. Sansari Lal himself told the researcher,

"*Mujhe bhi dariya par karte waqt dar lag raha tha kyunki ek to raat thi upar se yeh dar tha ki agar police wahan hui to weh mujhe goli mar denge. Mein dariya par karne ke bad kuch samay tak jhadion mein chupa raha aur jab dekha ki police ja chuki hai to jalti lashon ko bujhaya apne kandhe pe lada dariya tairte huye par le aya*"

[I was also scared while crossing the river because firstly, it was night and secondly, if police would be there, they would certainly shoot me. After crossing the river, for sometime, I hid myself behind the bushes and when I saw that the police had left I put off the pyre, carried the dead bodies on my shoulder and swam back across the river].

The feat *extraordinaire* of a young *swayamsevak* proved instrumental in generating the much-needed sympathy for the movement. The already burgeoning movement got fresh lease of life and the central leadership too was awakened to the happenings. Now after getting the bodies from Basantpur, Sansari Lal kept them in the empty house of his uncle (*chacha*) at Shahpur itself.²²⁴ Next day, those half burnt bodies were taken to Pathankot roamed around in the public, photographed, and taken to various other cities and in the end to New Delhi where they were shown to different leaders prominent among was Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Those bodies were then brought back to their native places and cremated with full honours. Nowadays at that place a fair is organized every year to commemorate the event.²²⁵

Besides this major contribution of the Punjab RSS, the

224. *Ibid.*

225. Chajju Ram Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

logistical support provided by its cadres to the movement went unabated right from its beginning till its end in 1953. As the movement progressed, the *satyagraha* was launched by the Praja Parishad (in J and K) and BJS (in other parts of India) against the already mentioned, permit system. Therefore, the *jathas* of the RSS workers from various parts of India, prominently from Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, U.P., Rajasthan, Delhi and Punjab itself started marching towards Jammu. But due to the prevailing permit system their entry was banned. Therefore in order to gain entry into the state these *swayamsevaks* made full use of the porous border between Punjab and J and K in the Gurdaspur district. The *jathas* (groups) of the *swayamsevaks* coming from various parts for entering J and K stayed and hid themselves in the neighbouring border villages of Punjab namely Bamial, Narot Jaimal Singh, Gughran, Taloor, etc. The *swayamsevaks* from these villages notably, Raghuvir Singh, tehsil *sanghchalak* Tek Singh, Punjab Singh, Balakram, Mulkhraj, Karam Singh, Dharam Singh helped these *swayamsevaks* by arranging lodging for them, providing food and then ferrying them to J and K state in the night.²²⁶ These *swayamsevaks* while going to J and K took newspapers along with them to be distributed among the general public. Besides sending *satyagrahis* to

226. It is interesting to note the *modus operandi* of the whole movement here. The *satyagrahis* in disguise hiding themselves from the Punjab government came to these border villages. The names of the *swayamsevaks* mentioned were also the influential landlords of these villages. In the daytime they employed the *satyagrahis* in their fields and orchards as ordinary labourers and when there loomed the danger of police raids these people hide themselves in the fields and in the trees of those orchards. In the evening they were provided with the meals, which was prepared in 24-hour kitchen run by these landlords and then in the pitch of night they were dispatched to J and K where they courted arrest. For the sake of convenience of the *satyagrahis*, these people (landlords) used to hang a bell outside their houses so that anyone coming at any odd hour could get necessary requirements.

J and K, these villages and these persons also served as the hiding places and refuge for the fugitives from that state (RSS people from the Praja Parishad) when they were hunted by the J and K police. This whole phenomenon continued till the end when the movement succeeded and the *satyagrahis* were freed from jails and the Sheikh government was ultimately dismissed.²²⁷

The efforts of the *swayamsevaks* under the banner of the Praja Parishad soon began bearing fruit. Once a taboo, criticism of Sheikh soon began to be articulated in the parliament and the press. Leaders of public opinion, casting aside their differences began evincing keen interest in the affairs of the state. The Bhartiya Jana Sangh took the lead and over 15,000 Delhi citizens marched and congregated outside the Parliament House on June 26, 1952 when the parliament was scheduled to debate the Kashmir issue. The demonstrators were received by Mookerjee, Ramchandra Reddy, Sardar Hukam Singh, N.C. Chatterjee and other parliamentarians.²²⁸ The movement, as days went on, turned into a veritable storm of protest. The end of December saw the call of "no integration - no taxation" by the protestors. All the villages joined the march of *satyagrahis* at Chamb, a border town in the west of Jammu. At this point in the melee one *swayamsevak*, Mela Ram,²²⁹ was killed in the police firing when he was trying to hoist the tricolour on the tehsil building. This resultantly made him the symbol of struggle thereby immensely pressurizing the Sheikh government.

227. Interview with Chaggar Singh, Balwant Singh, Om Prakash Wazir and Chajju Ram.

228. H.V. Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 43, 44.

229. He was the resident of the Chamb and it was said that during the protest he was carrying the tricolour in his hand and the photograph of the president Dr. Rajender Prasad around his neck. (On the basis of interview with Chajju Ram Gupta).

The climax of the movement came when Mookerjee set on his whirlwind tour to generate support for the movement. By this time due to the prohibition orders entry of 11 dailies and weeklies into Kashmir had been banned and the publications of four others in Kashmir, suspended.²³⁰ When some leaders of the movement met prime minister Nehru apprising him of the situation in J and K and resulting repression by the government, Nehru's response was discouraging. He said that if he had been at his (Sheikh's) place he would have been more strict.²³¹The *satyagrah* during this time was being launched simultaneously in Delhi and Pathankot. The Pathankot agitation was being led by one Om Parkash Bhardwaj. Many local leaders of the RSS and BJS were arrested during this agitation notably Pandit Bishen Dass, Chajju Ram Gupta, Jaikar Mahajan and some others. On May 9, 1953, Mookerjee started from Delhi and before reaching Pathankot on May 11, addressed public gatherings at Ambala, Ludhiana, Phagwara, Jalandhar and Amritsar. At Pathankot, he was told by the deputy commissioner of Gurdaspur, Vashisth, that he can go to J and K without the permit. But on the other side of the border the government of J and K had banned his entry and, therefore, he was arrested at Madhopur bridge, whisked away and kept in detention. After his arrest, the arrest of the agitators followed at various places in Punjab and J and K. The protestors were jailed in the jails of Gurdaspur, Yol camp and Jammu.²³²

On June 23, 1953, the news of Mookerjee's death was broadcast on the radio, which sent a shock wave across the nation

230. H.V.Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

231. Interview with Chaggar Singh and also see Chajju Ram Gupta *op. cit.*, p. 6.

232. Chajju Ram Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8.

because the giant who entered J and K hale and hearty returned dead.²³³ The reasons behind his death remained a mystery with the government claiming that he died of heart attack while the supporters of BJS suspected that he was slowly poisoned to death. The anti climax came when the Sheikh government was dismissed and Sheikh was arrested on August 9, 1953. Thus, the stand of the RSS spearheaded by the Praja Parishad was vindicated. Although all demands of the movement were not fulfilled yet this agitation paved the way for the number of further steps taken subsequently at the state and central levels for ultimate integration of the state. So there was the end of permit system and achievement of financial integration. The National flag became the flag of J and K, *sadar-e-riyasat* became the governor instead of president and the prime minister of J and K became the chief minister of J and K. Scores of central laws earlier not applicable to J and K now were applied to the state.

In 1954 the Praja Parishad took the historic decision to end its regional identity and merged itself with the pan-Indian party, The Bhartiya Jana Sangh.²³⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on growth and work of the RSS in the period of utter communal strife. The fortunes of the RSS during this period in Punjab and in other parts of northern India were, undoubtedly, linked to the partition prospect. Therefore, in such extraordinary circumstances which required the RSS to prove its worth, the organization assumed the functions of a militia, organized

233. During this public address at Amritsar on May 10, he reportedly said that he will revoke the permit system else give his life. (Interview with Chajju Ram Gupta).

234. H.V.Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

for defensive and offensive purposes.²³⁵ The large scale riots which erupted in the wake of partition provided fertile ground to the various communal organizations, which, to use the terminology of Christophe Jafferlot, were engaged in a three fold strategy of 'stigmatization' and 'emulation' of threatening others.²³⁶ These had created vulnerability complexes among all the principal communities of Punjab, but the Hindus and the Sikhs were its worst sufferers. The RSS without missing the opportunity, encashed this vulnerability.

Besides indulging in the full scale rioting which is an extreme form of ethnic nationalism, the RSS derived its strength in this period by providing large scale succour to the uprooted Hindus. This was by the way of rescuing the Hindus from the Muslim dominated areas, especially, women folk from the Muslim men's clutches and rehabilitating the refugees. The Hindu nationalists in this respect worked in close tandem with the Sikhs and many times both the RSS and the Sikh *jathas* undertook 'joint operations' against the Muslims in general and its militia (particularly, National Guards, Khaksars, *etc.*) in particular. Therefore, the circumstances that emerged during the partition and after the partition heightened the respectability of the Hindu nationalists among the Hindu masses. The people, most of whom were the sufferers of the partition became more receptive to its appeals. The strategies adopted by the RSS during these extraordinary circumstances often got silent support of the Congress and other politically rival Hindu groups who viewed RSS as, perhaps, the only organized group capable of the task.

235. K.D.Jhari, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

236. Christophe Jafferlot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to 1990s*, Viking, London, 1993, p. 76.

The situation, however, was changing rapidly. After independence, the Indian national situation took a violent turn with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The mantle of the murder fell on the RSS by virtue of the fact that Godse was once its member. The good work of the RSS went down the drain by this single accusation and it suddenly became a villain in the eyes of the whole country. Though in the subsequent inquiries it emerged guiltless but its reputation had been severely tarnished by mere accusation and the ban, the first since its inception. Its reconstruction again started but in a new manner and that was hallmarked by its search for a viable political alternative to the Congress, who often took the RSS as its biggest rival. The end result of this Hindu nationalistic search was the formation of Jana Sangh, which was carved out to give vent to the political orientations of the RSS activists through political action. And, therefore, by the way of politics it was ultimately meant to infuse Hindu nationalist values into public life.

Besides other strategies adopted by the RSS and the Jana Sangh in the post independent India to carve its niche, the most important pertaining to northern India was the Praja Parishad movement. This movement, though, predominantly, was for the full integration of J and K with the Indian Union and for the removal of unjustified restrictions imposed by the state government enjoying the support of Nehru. But the subtle under currents of the movement were directed against the Muslim dominance in the state headed by the Hindu Maharaja. The Praja Parishad movement was a political one and involved the state of J and K only, but the note worthy aspect of the movement was the participation of the RSS cadres of other states for performing *satyagraha* and to court arrest. The RSS cadres from Punjab were conspicuous by their presence which gave Praja Parishad the colour of an interstate agitation with nationalistic hues.

The partition, riots and refugee rehabilitation created the conditions for the RSS to expand and employ its strategies. The creation of separate Muslim state along the borders of Punjab provided an added advantage for them and they used it to the hilt. But unexpectedly Mahatma's murder changed the whole scenario. In the government also, the two fold division of opinion regarding the RSS created confusion with Nehru being openly hostile and wary of the RSS aspirations, while the home minister Sardar Patel had a soft corner for them. Mahatma's murder proved an anti-climax for the RSS and alienated its supporters in the Congress. The situation of Punjab was no different; however, the stigma was less severe as Punjab Hindus were the greatest beneficiaries of the RSS's services. The Jana Sangh phenomenon, however, provided political succour to the beleaguered RSS after the ban. But the political situation of the state was fast changing after independence, which was not as conducive to the RSS growth as the pre independence one. How far the RSS succeeded in setting its own house in order, putting brakes on its depleting ranks, looked out for the new strategies and implemented these on new issues will be deliberated in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

The RSS from 1952–1966

In this chapter the thrust will be upon the RSS's history and its work in Punjab from 1952 to 1966. This was precisely the period when the RSS was re-assessing itself as it had come out from the tormentous times of ban and there was decline in its popularity due to the allegation of Gandhi's murder. In spite of the annihilation attempts on the part of political dispensation, the RSS was still reluctant to enter fully into the political arena. There were the evidences which also suggested the dilemma RSS had on the political participation. It experienced an internally divisive debate, which involved the question of strategy and goals. But now one thing was quite clear and, on which there was unanimity among the rank and file that was its determination to play a more active role in country's development.

In Punjab, like in many other parts of India this was the time of the RSS history when it suffered from high attrition. It was due to the host of factors which individually and collectively contributed towards this. First and the most important among these factors were the after effects of the ban and the resultant sufferings. Those *swayamsevaks* who went through the hardships were disillusioned. Their personal lives were shattered as their family and professions were in dire straits. The *swayamsevaks* (or their parents) also thought that the RSS membership will hinder their career possibilities or undermine their social status. Those who had left their families for the RSS, however, stuck to it but those with familial affiliations quit in substantial numbers. The pressure to come back from families was

quite succumbing.¹ Second important reason was the individual weak-mindedness and timidity of the *swayamsevaks* and probable fear of government's repression which they had experienced in the fateful days of the ban. Moreover, during the ban period the chain of hunger strikes which took place in various jails and ensuing police torture seeped the ordinary *swayamsevaks* and *pracharaks* of their vital physical strength. The lean bodies thus created a leaner organization. Thirdly, the defeat of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh candidates in first general elections of 1952 also caused much heart break among the RSS cadres who worked day in and day out for campaigning in their favour. The BJS was launched with much fan fare and activists in the RSS who advocated more active and direct participation of the RSS and who formed the backbone of its organizational strength were disillusioned. This was more so in Punjab which was the birth place of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh where it didn't win even a single assembly seat and attracted only 5.56 percent of votes, while in PEPSU it gained only two seats and attracted 5.56 percent of the popular votes.²

Nevertheless, many members continued their participation in the RSS activities despite various obstructions of the family, disillusionment and defeat. The extensive peer group contacts which the RSS provides for its members clearly induced sufficiently strong consensual norms among a large number of *swayamsevaks* to resist pressure to leave it. This cohesiveness was transferred to the BJS and other organizations of the *Sangh Parivar* when they came into

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1. Interview with Yashpal Mehta, retd. vice Principal of Government College Talwara and Head of Vidya Bharti in Punjab at Pathankot on December 28, 2007.
 2. B.D.Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 236.

existence, since most of them were the shakha colleagues. However, inspite of early attrition, the RSS didn't dilute its recruitment standards, which promoted organizational cohesion but simultaneously also placed limitations on the *Sangh's* mobilizing capacity. The result of this belief would be seen in the issue of state reorganization in which the RSS and BJS faced adverse results.

The main thrust of this chapter will be the role played by the RSS in different situations that Punjab faced during 1952 to 1966. This includes the language controversy i.e. Hindi versus Punjabi and ensuing Punjabi *Suba* movement. These movements were often taken as the Hindu-Sikh agitations where both principal communities of the Punjab pitted themselves against each other. But there was more to it, and in this chapter we shall be looking upon the issue from RSS point of view i.e. what was the RSS's perception *vis-à-vis* the whole issue and what was their possible cure for the problem. The second important issue that confronted RSS was the Cow Protection movement. Though it had an all India genesis but Punjab had its special place due to the strong presence of Arya Samajists who worked in tandem with the Hindu nationalists. Thirdly, Indo-China confrontation which happened in 1962 was quite an opportunity for the RSS to prove its patriotic credentials. Even though Punjab was not the theatre of the war but the *Sangh* through its propaganda in favour of Indian government and Indian army generated public support. From different cities of the Punjab they collected civil supplies and other necessities like blood for the soldiers fighting far away in North East. Fourthly, in similar fashion the Indo-Pak war of 1965 again saw widespread participation of the RSS in the war efforts. Their contribution was particularly important this time as the war was being fought in Punjab and its neighbouring states of J&K and Rajasthan. Besides arranging civil supplies for the army, the *swayamsevaks* in

some cases even carried arms and ammunition to the front lines. There was another issue perhaps not as important in Punjab as the above-mentioned ones but the RSS here too played its part and that was the Goa liberation movement from the Portuguese domination. The Punjab RSS responded to matter and dispatched its *swayamsevaks* to participate in non violent *satyagrah* in Goa.

In this chapter, therefore, we shall see the RSS response to these popular challenges, which country and the state faced. How it responded to these and if these responses had the popular support of the Hindus of which RSS claim itself as their platform? Further, the attitude of the Sikhs *vis-à-vis* the RSS stand will also be pondered upon. Overall, this chapter will deal with whole range of issues that cropped up in Punjab during this fifteen years' time frame.

Punjabi *Suba* Movement, Language Controversy and the RSS:

In the first decade after the independence, the Punjabi-Hindi controversy and the Punjabi *Suba* movement started raging in Punjab. This had created antagonism between the two main communities of the state. The agitation for the Punjabi *Suba* was engineered ostensibly for the fulfilment of the Punjabi interests and respectful place for Punjabi language and was tuned with the demands and creation of reorganized states in other parts of India. But it was a camouflage for seprate state, predominantly, a Sikh. Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leader at the helm of the Sikh affairs had been raising the demand with ever increasing fervour. But the RSS and its political limb the BJS viewed this whole agitation as the parleys for establishing a theocratic state on the borders of the country.³

In this agitation, there was the virtual polarization of the

3. Krishan Lal M.L.C., 'Punjabi *Suba* I.E. Sikh *Suba*', in *Organiser*, November 23, 1959.

two communities with the Hindus under the influence of Arya Samaj and BJS were prompted to record Hindi as their mother tongue inspite of obvious Punjabi.⁴ The Akalis on the other hand were doing much uproar *vis-à-vis* the move and were demanding otherwise. They were charging the Hindu leadership of deliberately scuttling their genuine and purely political demand. They were citing the similar moves by the government of India in other parts of the country particularly the bifurcation of Bombay State into Maharashtra and Gujrat. This ruckus was particularly endemic in the urban Punjab where the Aryas and the BJS had strong hold over the Hindu populace. The Akalis on the other side, true to their agitational politics and their claim to be the sole representatives of the Sikhs, were bent upon conflagrating the whole issue to serve their political ends.

The Hindu nationalist leadership, however, viewed unparallelism between the bifurcation of the Bombay and demand for Punjabi speaking state. To assert themselves they quoted the statement of States re-Organization Commission that stated,

"A peculiar nature of the demand for a Punjabi speaking state is that it is different from the similar demands for the separate state existing as a composite unit as in case of Bombay State which have had the backing of an overwhelming majority of the people of a particular group seeking such (...) the demand for a Punjabi speaking State is strongly opposed by the large sections of the people speaking the Punjabi language and residing in the areas which are to be constituted into the Punjabi speaking state"⁵

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4. For analytical study of the language controversy please see, Paul Brass, **Language, Religion and Politics in North India**, Vikas, New Delhi, 1975. Also refer to D.C.Pavate, **My Days as Governor**, Vikas, New Delhi, 1974 and Pandit Mohan Lal, **Disintegration of Punjab**, Sameer, Chandigarh, 1984.
 5. This statement is cited in the *Organiser*, November 1959.

It further stated that, " Basically the demand is communal one. Cultural and linguistic arguments have been pressed into service merely to camouflage the real motives".⁶

The RSS and the Arya Samajists believed that the Hindi language was always being discriminated in Punjab. The Punjabi language in the *Gurumukhi* script was regularly being taught in the schools run or aided by the state government throughout the Punjab state. The Hindi region had loyally, faithfully fallen in line with the policy of the state government in this matter but the Punjabi region was continuously defaulting in the adoption of the measures for the instructions of the Hindi. They further added that there were not few but virtually thousands of the schools in Punjab where there was no provision at all for the instruction of Hindi. There were no qualified teachers and staff for the Hindi teaching. There were the departments established by the state government for the promotion of Hindi and Punjabi languages nomenclatured as Punjabi and Hindi Development Departments. Reckoned in the terms of population, the expenditure of the departments ought to be proportioned as 65% on Hindi and 35% on Punjabi. But as a matter of fact, by far the largest proportion of the funds was placed at the disposal of the Punjabi language and *Gurumukhi* script. Further, they also cited the overuse of *Gurumukhi* in the official work and obvious despise for the documents written in *Devnagari* script for which they cited categorical statement of the Prime Minister of India and Article 350 regarding the use of any official language for the redressal of grievances.⁷

6. Ibid.

7. *Organiser*, July 4, 1960. This report in the *Organiser* details an array of misgivings that the Hindu nationalists were harboring *vis-à-vis* Sikh leadership in Punjab.

The protagonists of the *Maha Punjab* and the Hindi language further claimed that Punjab was already a Punjabi speaking *Suba* or Punjabi *Suba* where the apex administration was conspicuously dominated by the Sikh community. They asserted, 'the Chief Minister is a Sikh gentleman (Kairon), the next important portfolio *i.e.* revenue is also held by a Sikh, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly is a Sikh, the Chairman of the Punjab Legislative Council is a Sikh, the Head of PPSC is a Sikh, the Financial Commissioner is a Sikh'. The list, they said "was but illustrative and could be expanded *ad-infinitum*. On the whole, the entire state of Punjab virtually confirms to the ideals of the Punjabi *Suba*", they viewed.⁸

The Hindu leadership viewed that their Sikh brethren evidently overlooked the fact that if a separate Punjabi *Suba* is formed the Sikh community will automatically forfeit the protection and facilities for the propagation of the Punjabi language and the *Gurumukhi* script now enjoyed by them in the Hindi regions of Punjab. They said that a carefully tabulated statistical data showed 70% of the senior appointments and the key posts in the government and the semi government machinery of the state were held by the Sikh community. However their just proportion being 35%, Sikhs thus enjoy a virtual weightage of 200%. *Dewan Alakh Dhari*, former *Dewan* of Alwar State and an important member of the RSS fraternity mentioned during his informal discussion with one of the Sikh leaders regarding the *de-facto* situation wherein the Sikh leader confided to him,

"If Punjabi *Suba* is formed the Sikh community have to shed some of the prerequisites it enjoys at present due to weakness of the Hindus. The process of appeasement then has to be reversed.

8. Ibid.

Concessions will flow from Sikhs to Hindus".

The former Dewan also mentioned the statement of the President of the Indian National Congress Neelam Sanjiva Reddy (later on the President of India),

"There is nothing linguistic regarding the Akali agitation for Punjabi *Suba*. Essentially, it is a communal demand".⁹

Notwithstanding their earlier camaraderie with Master Tara Singh during the national movement, partition, their joint front against the Muslim League's onslaught, Hindu nationalists were wary of his manipulations and somersaults. Krishan Lal the then M.L.C. from Jana Sangh recalled the interview of Master Tara Singh with the then chief minister of the Punjab, Bhim Sen Sachar on January 21, 1955. The details of the interview were later on released as a government press *communiqué*. The report says, "Master Tara Singh stated that he did not believe in mere linguistic Punjabi State. What he had in mind was a Sikh state where the Sikhs would be in numerical majority".

Master Tara Singh further added that,

"This cover of Punjabi speaking state slogan serves my purpose well since it does not offend against nationalism (...) what we want is *azadi*. We Sikhs have no *azadi*. We will fight for our *azadi* with full force. Even if we have to revolt we will revolt to win our *azadi*".¹⁰ So the demand was not only for the Sikh state but the sovereign Sikh state. This dated back to the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, when the Akali Party submitted a memorandum to the British Government in which they expressed their yearnings, thus saying,

9. Ibid.

10. Quoted by Krishan Lal, op.cit.

"The Sikhs have as good a claim for an independent Sikh state as the *Musalmans*".¹¹

However, after the independence the compulsions of the real politik forced the Akalis to work in tandem with the Hindu nationalists in order to keep the Congress at bay. The Akali somersault continued because at this time both the Hindu and the Sikh nationalists were at the receiving end of the Nehru's secularism that was seriously thinking to curtail their spread. While speaking from the BJS platform Master Tara Singh reacted to Nehru's assertion that Hindu Mahasabha and Akali Dal were responsible for the partition of India, saying that, 'the big leader is telling very big lies'. For the Punjabi speaking province, which was in its infancy at that stage, he said that he would abide by the verdict of Savarkar should the government agreed to appoint him as the arbiter. To gain support of the broader Hindu community he asserted that in the wider aspect of things the objectives of BJS were the objectives of all the Sikhs.¹² These political parleys might be attributed to the political situation prevailing at that time. The Sikh leadership knew it very well that if the genuinity of their demands was acknowledged by the Hindu Mahasabha in general and Savarkar in particular, then it might be easier for them to persuade the Hindu leadership of Punjab who held Savarkar in high esteem.

The election results of 1952 perhaps were the watershed in the Akali-Sangh relationship. The rout of the Akalis proved that all the Sikhs were not in favour of the Punjabi speaking state. The Akali acrobatics continued and due to the internal strife in the party, to be precise between Tara Singh and Udham Singh Nagoke, when former

11. Ibid.

12. *Organiser*, January 14, 1952.

became more rabid in his demand of the Punjabi *Suba* having Sikh majority and for the objective even planned of joining their erstwhile political foes, the communists.¹³ The Hindu nationalists further accused the Akalis of opportunistic manoeuvring and displaying separatism. They asserted that when their (Akalis) deputation went to Pakistan in 1955 and during the reception at Lahore hosted by the City's Mayor, the Akalis found Pakistan and Indian national flags fluttering side by side. At the request of the Akali deputation, the Indian national flag was quietly put away and the Akali flag was hoisted.¹⁴

The ire of the Hindu leadership though extreme in certain contexts was not totally unfounded. The unfriendly behaviour of the Akalis was quite explicit during the proceedings of the Akali Dal Conference at Amritsar in January 1955, which was reported by eminent English daily. The newspaper reported:

"Annoyed at non-Sikh Hindus opposition to the demand of Punjabi *Suba*, the Akali leaders vented their spleen by applauding the operations of the foreign Christian missionaries and deprecated Hindu denunciation of their proselytizing activities".¹⁵

The Hindu leadership, on the other hand, said that the Sikhs were aggravating the difficulties of the distressed.¹⁶ By this they meant that the Punjabis had not forgotten the earlier bloody division of the Punjab in 1947 and were still in the process of

13. *Organiser*, June 6, 1952. The communists were also supporting the Akali demands however they viewed that there was no unity in the people of Punjab on the linguistic issue. See Satya M. Rai, *Partition of the Punjab*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, pp. 231 - 251.

14. *Organiser*, November 23, 1959.

15. *The Tribune*, Ambala, January 29, 1955.

16. *Organiser*, December 27, 1954.

reclaiming their shattered lives. So they were firm on their stand of *Maha Punjab*.¹⁷

The intentions of the Sikh leadership were made clear by Master Tara Singh. In a signed article published by him in his own paper '*Prabhat*' of Amritsar in April 1955, Master described his negotiations with Pakistan through mutual friends for cessation of some territory near Kartarpur Ravi in exchange for the land attached to the Sikh gurudwaras in Pakistan's territory. Of particular significance was the undertaking offered by Master Tara Singh to Pakistan as a bait for the acceptance of the above proposals. The undertaking as reported in *Organiser* is as follows:

"In return for the concessions by Pakistan, the Akali Dal would be prepared to assure Pakistan of its full support to any proposal that Pakistan may make to India for the establishment of similar Muslim zone at Sirhind".¹⁸

The fact of the matter was that the exclusive identification of the Punjabi language [which the Sikh community claimed to be the mother tongue of all - Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, inhabitants of Punjab] with a script which by all accounts was the theological script of the Sikh community had resulted in robbing Punjabi of its catholic character. Moreover, the Punjabi was not even the predominant language of the Sikh scriptures, which were written primarily in old Hindi though in *Gurumukhi* script.¹⁹ Yet, over the last century, Punjabi speaking Sikhs had increasingly come to attach importance to Punjabi written in *Gurumukhi* script 'as symbolic

17. Interview with Chajju Ram Sab, ex-MLA BJS, at Pathankot on December 28, 2007.

18. *Organiser*, November 23, 1959.

19. G.A.Grierson (ed.), *Linguistic Survey of India*, Volume-1, 'Pt.1: Introduction', Moti Lal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1967, p.170.

of separateness of the Sikh community'.²⁰ Across the frontier in the West Pakistan, Punjabi is still freely inscribed in the Persian script (*Shahmukhi*). Master Tara Singh in his signed article in the Akali Dal organ '*Prabhat*' in February 1956 wrote;

"It is absolutely wrong to say that the Sikhs want to force anybody to learn Punjabi language in the *Gurumukhi* script".

He further stated;

"*Gurumukhi* script is not at all compulsory for writing Punjabi language. It would be upto any individual to learn Punjabi language in *Gurumukhi* script or any other script. People should have freedom in this regard".

But later on the Akali Dal recanted from the said position thereby planting bristles in the smooth solution of the problem which was further aggravated by the Hindu obstinacy.

The Arya Samaj was the most vocal of the Hindus in repudiating the Akali claims. As a matter of fact many Aryas held key positions in the Jana Sangh hierarchy and so the Jana Sangh was also a party to them. The third party was the RSS with its cadre control on the Jana Sangh and close linkages with the Aryas. From the beginning of the movement RSS preferred to keep a low profile as it didn't want to embroil itself in what it perceived as political problem manipulated by the politicians to serve their ends. But as the problem in the initial stages was most intransigent, the local RSS and the BJS leadership were refusing to budge and to give any concessions to Akalis. But then there was also a feeling that their stand might led to the accusation of they being forcibly trying to assimilate Sikhs within the

20. Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in Punjab*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1966, p. 45.

Hindu pantheon and thereby undermining their minority character.²¹ The *Sangh* therefore, was caught in a tricky situation which demanded careful manipulations which RSS did by projecting BJS to the forefront while itself taking the backstage.

The *Sangh* leadership was initially ready to soften their stand when Lala Balraj Bhalla of BJS said that although he was opposed to the demand for a Punjabi speaking state but he was in favour of adopting both Hindi and Punjabi as regional language for Punjab (...).²² However, the appointment of SRC in December 1953 was followed by the protracted and intense controversies between the rival territorial groups in the Punjab. The Hindu nationalists reiterated that Punjab, PEPSU and Himachal Pradesh should be brought together to form a greater Punjab thus establishing a strong, stable and politically reliable state on the frontier with Pakistan.²³ The Akalis on the other hand stepped up their programme of marches and demonstrations. The RSS commented on Master Tara Singh's threatening posture of revolt unless Sikhs got independence. They said that Punjabi *Suba* was a new slogan of pre-partition demand of the Akalis for independent and sovereign Sikh state. The RSS was of the view that he actually wanted a Sikh state as a buffer between India and Pakistan and therefore, to use it for blackmailing. They called Giani Kartar Singh as an 'evil genius' who was backing such demand. The *Sangh* further added that Tara Singh off and on also pleaded for the Muslims in India and accused the Hindus of enslaving

21. Bruce Graham, op. cit., p. 103.

22. *The Tribune*, Ambala, October 3, 1951, *Times of India*, Delhi, October 6, 1951.

23. Press conference by Mauli Chandra Sharma, National President of BJS, New Delhi, May 27, 1954, reported in *The Statesman*, Delhi May 28, 1954. Also 'Memorandum by Punjab BJS', *The Statesman*, May 2, 1954.

the Sikhs and others. The RSS also blamed the Akalis of wooing foreign missionaries.²⁴ The allegations of the RSS against the Akalis were not without reason and were just to some extent. Bahadur Singh, an Akali M.P., in one of his articles in the leading Akali weekly said that the *shuddhi* movement had nothing to do with the Sikhs and had created a great doubt in the mind of minorities. They felt terrified and alarmed. They were justified in their feelings.²⁵ The blame game continued when the *Sangh* leadership accused Tara Singh of breaking law 24 times during his speeches and wrote to Punjab chief minister to control the situation and to take necessary action. They said that Masterji wants '*chhota Sikh* state' and ensured government of its cooperation in the broader interests of the country.²⁶

In the meantime, the recommendations of the SRC came. They recommended Himachal Pradesh as a Union Territory and the new Punjab to be divided into two regions, one the Punjabi speaking and other the Hindi speaking. The State would have a single legislative assembly which could however meet as two separate regional committees, both Punjabi and Hindi continued to be the official languages. However, at district level or below, Punjabi would be the language in the Western region and Hindi in the Eastern region. As a symbol of unity, Chandigarh would remain as a Union Territory with a separate territory of its own.²⁷ But the Hindu nationalists particularly the Aryas denounced it and launched an agitational campaign against the scheme and declared to resist it by all possible

24. *Organiser*, March 7, 1955.

25. *Spokesman* (Weekly), February 23, 1955.

26. *Organiser*, May 2, 1955.

27. For the complete text of the formula see 'Annexure No.26' of 'Appendix VI' in *Lok Sabha Debates*, 12th Session, 1956, 'Appendices' pp. 557, 558 Also see B.R.Nayar op.cit., pp. 222, 223.

means and at all costs.²⁸

However, the results of 1957 assembly elections proved instrumental in the whole agitation. The Congress emerged as the single largest party getting 120 seats out of 164 and BJS only 9.²⁹ The *Sangh* was clearly in a dilemma. Now if they continued with their opposition to the Regional Formula, they risked opposition from the moderate opinion as a group intolerant to other languages *vis-à-vis* Hindi. On the contrary, if they accepted the formula still equal was the risk of alienating the Arya Samajists whose considerable clout among the urban Hindus was ostensible. The central leadership of the RSS was now in the damage control mood but the local leadership was reluctant to follow their commands and the Regional Formula. Their hard stand was discernible when they threw their lot with the *Sarvdeshik Bhasha Swatantrya Samiti*, an agency of International Aryan League with the local control vested in the *Hindi Raksha Samiti* (HRS) and Acharya Ram Dev; the President of the Punjab Jana Sangh was its prominent leader.³⁰

The central leadership of the Hindu nationalists with the RSS at the helm of the affairs reluctantly backed the agitational moves of its local cadres. This hullabaloo was temporarily suspended in December 1957 to crop up again after two months. An incident happened in Jalandhar on February 8, 1958, when a clash occurred between the members of HRS and the Sikhs, when the formers procession was passing a Sikh shrine. In the ensuing conflict police had to intervene which resulted into the death of two persons and

28. *Statesman*, Delhi, August 28, 1956.

29. Bruce Graham op. cit., p.106.

30. Gerald A Heeger, 'Discipline versus Mobilization: Party Building and the Punjab Jana Sangh', *Asian Survey*, XII, October 10, 1972, pp. 870, 871.

injury to twenty-eight (of these many were RSS and Jana Sangh workers). The government's move was criticized by the Hindu nationalists.³¹ The RSS cleared the air and said that Punjabi was not a regional language like Marathi or Bengali, but a simple dialect of Hindi and that the Sikhs were not a separate religious community as the Muslims and the Christians, but a particular sect of the Hinduism. They, therefore, demanded that Punjab should be treated as a bilingual zone. The most vocal and persuasive advocate of this stand was Balraj Madhok³² [The organising secretary of BJS north zone and an erstwhile *pracharak* of the RSS in J and K who was lent to the BJS by Golwalkar].

The RSS was of the view that the real problem of the Punjab was not the problem of language; it was the problem of the script. If the government had not scumbled to the Akali pressure then whole ugliness could have been avoided.³³ The Hindu nationalists, as a matter of fact, till this time, were quite unrealistic in their agitation. Even though they had backed away from further pro Hindi agitations after the failure of HRS campaign in 1957, their basic approach still remained anchored to the belief that the common ground between the Sikhs and the Hindus would lead to their reconciliation.³⁴

At this juncture of mutual distrust in Punjab between the Hindus and the Sikhs and short sightedness adopted by the local Hindu nationalist leadership, the RSS chief Golwalkar voiced his saner views. He, as mentioned in the chapter 2, during his 16-day sojourn in Punjab from October 24 to November 9, 1960, presented his views in

31. Sixth National Session of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh, Ambala, April 5, 1958, BJS Documents IV, pp. 3-12.

32. Bruce Graham op. cit., pp. 108, 109.

33. Interview with Late Vishwanath; former Punjab *prant pracharak*.

34. Bruce Graham op. cit., pp. 110-111.

a series of lectures to the *Sangh* leadership in the state and its cadres. Clearing the air regarding the RSS stand, he stated that his statements and informal talks had been quoted out of context in sectional and prejudicial manner by the press in the light of the present complicated political situation of the province. It was, therefore, desirable for him to reiterate the RSS stand with regard to the Punjab. He stated,

"The RSS stands for an integrated and unified *Hindu Rashtra*. It does not recognize the differences of caste, creed, language or province. The present unfortunate tension in the Punjab is due to the people thinking on sectarian and communal line in complete oblivion of the fact that they are Hindus. The Akali Dal has therefore, trying contrary to its original mission, to organize the Sikhs on the separatist basis for an independent political entity. This step is destructive for the real religious character of the *panth* and is dangerous for the unity and integrity of the nation as well. The demand for a Punjabi *Suba* being an expression for this separatist tendency cannot be supported. The RSS believed in the unitary form of the government where the provinces would exist merely as administrative units. However, even in this present political set up of linguistic demarcation of the provinces, there is no reasons to sub divide the existing Punjab. In whole Punjab the Punjabi is prevalent. But unlikely of the other provinces, a great number of such people reside throughout the state that use Hindi as their mother tongue. Therefore, Punjabi and Hindi should be used as official languages of the province".

He further said,

"Due to different political reasons Punjabi has been deprived of its legitimate place in the Punjab. The way in which Akali Dal has been agitating for the recognition of Punjabi and the policy adopted by the government in this regard had only created

apprehensions in the minds of the people speaking it as their mother tongue. No language can be linked with the religion or sect. It is the sacred duty of all Punjabi people not to allow their mother tongue to become a hand maid of politics and separatism. The present equation of the Punjabi with the Sikhs is contrary to the facts and is un-historic. The question of the script is to be decided by all those who use a particular language. If the Punjabi speaking people desire the use of *Nagri* for Punjabi, why should it be made bone of contention? In fact the use of *Nagri* is being suggested for all the provincial languages of the country. However, the question of script is to be ultimately decided in due course of practice".

He continued,

"It is necessary that there should be mutual goodwill and confidence between all sections of the Hindus (Sikhs included). This can be done only by the realization of our Hinduhood and by being proud of it. The phraseology, 'Hindu and Sikh' signifying mutual exclusiveness should not be used. The Sikhs and Hindus keeping aloft the sublime tradition of the gurus let them always and in all walks of the life, affirm their membership to this great Hindu society. So, again let everyone in Punjab boldly own his respective mother tongue without any fear, hesitation or consideration of political expediency. Only in such assertion of the truth lies an abiding solution of the Punjab's tangle".³⁵

Prior to the above declaration by the RSS central office regarding the issue of the language and territory, the RSS Chief at Jalandhar during his meeting with the state functionaries on November 2, 1960 advised Punjabi Hindus to accept Punjabi as their mother

35. This was the statement of Golwalkar issued by the RSS (Centre Nagpur), Jhandewalan Mandir, New Delhi on November 10, 1960.

tongue.³⁶ This statement of the RSS chief was meant to create congenial atmosphere in Punjab to maintain unity of the Hindu nation. During an informal talk with the citizens in the same afternoon, he strongly criticized those who preached that Punjabi was not the mother tongue of the Hindus. Referring to the script issue, he said that those who own Punjabi as their mother tongue had the right to determine its script. Referring to the Punjabi *Suba* movement agitation, Golwalkar said that if the Hindus wouldn't remove the misgivings of the Sikhs, the creation of Punjabi *Suba* would be inevitable. He demanded that the whole state should be declared as unilingual with certain safe guards for those whose dialect was different from Punjabi. He said that if linguistic state had to be created and had been created in other parts of the country, there is no justification for denying a Punjabi *Suba* for Punjabi speaking people. Towards the conclusion of his meeting, he appealed to the Punjabi Hindus to give up sectarian tendencies and should strengthen their unity to achieve united and prosperous Punjab.³⁷ Soon after Golwalkar concluded his tour; the state working committee of the Jana Sangh rejected his proposal for a unilingual state. Instead it resolved that both Hindi in *Devnagari* script and Punjabi in *Gurumukhi* will serve as joint official languages.³⁸ Therefore, the schism between the local and the central units of the *Sangh* came out in open, which ultimately harmed the Hindi cause of the locals. The legislative wing of the party more responsive to the will of its Hindi speaking constituency took a

36. The Tribune, Ambala, November 3, 1960.

37. M.L.Virman (ed.), *Sri Guruji Punjab Mein*, Vishwa Samvad Kendra, Jalandhar, 2006, p. 62.

38. The Tribune, Ambala, October 20, 1960.

far less conciliatory stand and strongly rejected Golwalkar's pleas for Punjabi.³⁹

Nevertheless, Golwalkar's clear-cut views on the language controversy gave a new direction to the course of Hindu thinking. The most vocal supporters of the Hindi were taken aback and the Akali ideologues too, directly or indirectly, endorsed his views. Sadhu Singh Hamdard, editor of the renowned Punjabi daily, '*Ajit*', commented in his editorial on November 11, 1960 "(...) after the clear cut pronouncement by Shri Golwalkar, Hindi protagonist leaders of the Jana Sangh have now started accepting Punjabi as their mother tongue, but they are still not ready to accept *Gurumukhi* script as its script. If they accept this then the demand for Punjabi *Suba* will become defunct". Similarly, reacting to Golwalkar's statement the then Punjab Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Kairon said,

"If the Hindus of Punjab think sanely and accept Punjabi as their mother tongue, then it will be a great thing, and on this base the edifice of Punjab's unity will be laid".⁴⁰

Even though the regional leaders of the RSS were against the Akali demands but the concerted efforts of Golwalkar, who knew that such moves on the part of the Hindus might hinder the broad RSS agenda of united '*Hindu Rashtra*' of which the Sikhs were the important constituents. To supplement his touring efforts, he also corresponded regularly with the local RSS men. These correspondences revealed his efforts of damage control. In his letter to Krishan Lal of Jalandhar, dated on September 28, 1960, Golwalkar wrote that the big leaders of the state were creating an uncordial

39. *Times of India*, Delhi, November 9, 1960.

40. *Ajit*, November 6, 1960.

atmosphere. So, there was a need for the RSS to perform its duty of stopping such disruptive tendencies arising due to the communal feelings in the state with constructive work, which alone it could do. Therefore, he should work whole-heartedly for the said purpose.⁴¹ He was also simultaneously corresponding with the Sikh religious leaders notable among them was Gurudev Singh Namdhari, the guru of *Namdhari* sect of the Sikhs. In his letter Golwalkar urged him, 'to dispel the separatist tendencies prevailing among the Hindus and the Sikhs which was a handiwork of the people with vested political interests. The *Namdhari* guru with his strong following among the Sikhs is an appropriate person for creating goodwill and amity'.⁴²

Guru Golwalkar also cleared the RSS view point regarding the linguistic reorganization of the states during one of his interview sessions. He said, '(...) in the RSS's view, the linguistic reorganization was necessary for the sake of administrative convenience and thriftiness. But this should not antagonize the people of the province with different linguistic affiliations. The sanskritised Hindi could be the national language and it would be much easier and comprehensible for the people living beyond Vindhyas. The Arabic and the Persian version of Hindi would be difficult for them to understand. To solve the language problem, a single acceptable language should be adopted which should also be appropriated for higher education and research purposes. The Sanskrit language would serve the purpose as it was quite rich and connotes holiness. This would bring various provinces closer, therefore, paving the way for unity. Hindi language could also serve the purpose, though it was not as old as some of the other Indian languages. Many regional languages are more prosperous and

41. M.L.Virman (ed.), op. cit., p. 38.

42. Ibid.

rich *vis-à-vis* Hindi. Tamil, for instance was 2500 years old. So it would be wrong to say Hindi was a richer language than other languages’.

He further elaborated, ‘(…) all the languages originating in India were the national languages and all constituted national heritage. Hindi was also one of them. But by the virtue of its more speakers it deserved the status of a state language but to say that only Hindi was a national language and others were regional languages was wrong. The view of the RSS regarding the status of English was quite clear. During the time of language controversy, someone told me that Cricket is their national sport; English dress code is their national attire and English language is our national language. I commented that the last thing to say, now is that our country is an English nation. Every country has adopted their native language as their national language *viz. Brahmadesh* (Burma) had adopted *Brahmi* (Burma), Srilanka Sinhalese, even South Africa where about 94-96 languages are spoken by the different tribes have unanimously accepted Swahili their national language then what is the problem with India which is more advanced than Africa. In spite of having such rich languages, we have adopted foolish view point. I view that our states are fighting on various issues, then should it be prudent to say that English raj is its cure’.⁴³

RSS view point of the national language was candidly explained by its chief in the above paragraph. These views hold true to Punjab also which was in continuous turmoil due to the language controversy and the resultant Punjabi *Suba* movement. The Akalis and

43. Sri Guruji Samagra, Volume 9, [Golwalkar's Collective Writings in Hindi in 12 Volumes], Surchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 68-80.

the local Hindu nationalist leadership were adamant upon imposing their attitude upon each other and thereby endeavouring to gain upper hand in the Punjab polity and society. In one way, therefore, the Maha Punjab demand of the Hindu nationalists was a tactical move. The Hindu community who was opposing the demand for the Punjabi *Suba* was due to their consideration that it was an attempt on the part of the Akali Dal to establish Sikh political hegemony.⁴⁴ The Hindu business interest also was the main ingredients of the Hindu attempts to abort the Sikh moves. So apart from the emotional reasons there were political and economic considerations. They feared that their interest would be compromised under the Sikhs.⁴⁵ These businessmen and other middle class urban Hindus formed the core constituency of the RSS and therefore, the RSS as an organization in spite of keeping itself aloof from the whole issue didn't forbid its individual member from retorting to the Akali demands.

Although the Punjab problem was endemic and the RSS unwillingly got embroiled in it by the virtue of its parental linkage with the Bhartiya Jana Sangh who was in the thick of whole agitation. However, the top brass of the *Sangh* at Nagpur didn't want that RSS, in any case be a partner to any controversy, which challenged its thesis of Hindu-Sikh singularity. Golwalkar on September 7, 1961 wrote to the Punjab RSS and Jana Sangh leader Jagdish Abrol (at Amritsar) regarding perplexed Punjab problem. He stated that the role of RSS was of a unifying force and these fasts and counter fasts agitations were making the problem more severe. These haughty men, he said, (those on fasts) should understand that this (agitation) would

44. Krishan Gopal Lamba, *Dynamics of Punjabi Suba Movement*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1999, p. 91.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

malign and create alienation in the society, which would ultimately compromise nation's unity and security. Therefore, these men should immediately shun that evil path by toning down their false egos. ⁴⁶ In the very next year, again corresponding with Jagdish Abrol (at Amritsar), Golwalkar expressed his satisfaction with the RSS work. He, however, was critical of allegations and counter allegations, which were maligning the mutual relations. Though it was happening due to the election scenario in Punjab in which every group was trying to vilify the other in order to cash the tumultuous Punjab situation. He repeatedly urged the local leadership and the cadre (which was backing and working day in and day out for the Jana Sangh candidates) to create an atmosphere of amity and good will because all the players were working for this nation and therefore, mutual ill-will should not found space among them. The RSS must upheld sportsman spirit and should commit itself to the organisational work. After the elections, it should work for social equilibrium and try to maintain it. ⁴⁷

In Akali Dal also the leadership was changing hands and now it passed on to *Sant* Fateh Singh from Master Tara Singh whose popularity was plunging down with every passing year. *Sant* resorted to the fast unto death on December 18, 1960 but later on gave up after 21 days. Now it was the turn of Master Tara Singh to prove his Sikh credentials, so now he went on fast on August 10, 1961. To counter Master's pressure tactics, Rameshwaranand and Yograj and Suryadev of *Hindi Raksha Samiti* also started fasts at the Arya Samaj *mandir*, Delhi and Arya Samaj Mandir, Amritsar to oppose any scheme of Punjabi *Suba*. ⁴⁸ The Punjab Jana Sangh with the support of the RSS

46. M.L.Virman (ed.), op. cit., p. 39. The text of the letter is reproduced in this book.

47. Ibid.

48. Times of India, Delhi August 16, 1961.

cadres announced August 27, 1961, as 'United Punjab Day'.⁴⁹ However, on Prime Minister Nehru's assurance both sides agreed to break their fast due to the Chinese aggression of 1962, therefore the Hindu nationalists and the Akalis both deferred their demands.

Again on August 16, 1965, Sant Fateh Singh announced his plans to proceed on fast and then to self immolate if *Suba* demand was not granted.⁵⁰ To counter it on the other hand Yograj, Suryadev, Ramgopal Shalwala and several other Hindu leaders particularly from the RSS and Jana Sangh registered their names for the offer of sacrificing themselves if the government of India yielded to *Sant* Fateh Singh's demands.⁵¹ All this was happening notwithstanding Golwalkar's repeated rhetoric of amity among the Hindus and the Sikhs and his urge to the Hindus for accepting Punjabi. Meanwhile, *Swami* Satyanand, an Arya leader from Jalandhar, on February 28, 1966, announced his decision to go on fast unto death till the government gave positive and satisfactory assurance to preserve the bilingual setup and geographical unity of Punjab.⁵² Also Yagya Dutt Sharma, a former *swayamsevak* and the BJS general secretary of Punjab began fast unto death to preserve the unity of the state.⁵³

There were large scale demonstrations and the strikes in many towns of the Punjab including Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Hissar, Panipat, Amritsar followed by violence at many places. In these the agitations the RSS men took active part but in their individual capacities and as Hindus. The local RSS leaders were also not in the mood to

49. Krishan Gopal Lamba, op. cit., p. III.

50. J.C.Anand, "Politics of Treating Communalism", in Iqbal Narain (ed.), *State politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1976, p. 265.

51. *Organiser*, August 29, 1965.

52. *The Tribune*, March I, 1966.

53. *Organiser*, March 13, 1966.

stop their cadres from agitating what they viewed as a move directly affecting the Punjabi Hindus. But the RSS as an organization was not party to it.⁵⁴ There took place violent incidents at Amritsar and Jalandhar where the agitators took law in their hands and therefore, to control the situation curfew had to be imposed. At Ludhiana clashes between the Hindus and the Sikhs took place and at Panipat mob burnt alive three veteran Congressmen in a shop owned by one of them on G.T.Road.⁵⁵ The businessmen, most of whom were from the RSS background from Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Batala, Kapurthala and, Phagwara warned central leaders of the flight of industry and capital from Punjab if it was truncated.⁵⁶ The local leaders, however, were clearly concerned and motivated more by their business interests rather by the nationalist feelings.

The central leadership of the RSS was much concerned to about the worsening Punjab situation. Golwalkar with his discerning eye on the happenings of Punjab corresponded with Yagya Dutt Sharma. In his letter written on March 16, 1966, urged him to end his fast. He said that the motive of his fast unto death was successfully fulfilled as it prevented the common Hindu and Sikh of the province from splitting. As a worker of the RSS he was too precious for the country and due to his fast, inspite of the viciousness created by the Punjabi *Suba* movement, the Sikh-non Sikh relations still remained cordial.⁵⁷ These persuasions and entreaties from other Hindu nationalists, along with the assurances given in the Parliament by the

54. Interview with Vishwanath.

55. Krishan Gopal Lamba, op. cit. p. 102.

56. *The Tribune*, March 6, 1960.

57. M.L.Virman, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

Union Home Minister, Yagya Dutt Sharma gave up his fast on March 21, 1966.⁵⁸ The partition was carried through quickly and Punjab was trifurcated. The new states of Punjab and Haryana came into existence on November 1, 1966 and the hill areas were joined to Himachal Pradesh.

The Punjabi *Suba* came into being inspite of the vehement opposition by the Hindu nationalists. The RSS's stand on this issue which lingered on for almost one and half decade was cautious and calculated. In the beginning, it was wary of any direct confrontation with the government, from whom it had suffered brutal oppression in the aftermath of Mahatma's murder. It didn't oppose Akalis too, much as well due to their earlier camaraderie in the wake of partition, riots and refugee rehabilitation. The RSS adopted tactical approach in accordance to which it refrained itself from these agitations which were overtly political though with strong communal undertones. The RSS was satisfied by giving charge to its political outfit the Jana Sangh for agitations, counter agitations and negotiations *vis-à-vis* Akalis. More so, the RSS didn't want to antagonise the common Sikh masses (*keshdhari* Hindus). Like his earlier appeal to the Punjabi Hindus to accept Punjabi as their mother language, Golwalkar again toured Punjab in April, 1966 along with Balraj Madhok, urged the Hindus of the Punjab to acknowledge Punjabi as legitimate language and *Gurumukhi* as a proper script, for them to accept. Madhok too reiterated the earlier stand and said, "The Jana Sangh regards, the Sikhs as part and parcel of the Hindu society".⁵⁹

However, in its core the RSS, inspite of repeated chants to the Hindus to accept Punjabi and to the Sikhs that they should

58. Statesman, Delhi, March 22, 1966.

59. Hindustan Times, Delhi, April 4, 1966.

declare themselves as Hindus first, was not in the favour of truncating Punjab once again the repercussions of which it had already witnessed and faced, that too, quite closely, only two decades back. But the emotionally charged atmosphere of Punjab on Hindi-Punjabi and Maha Punjab and Punjabi *Suba* issue didn't not stop the local RSS cadres from throwing their lot in the agitation with their other Hindu protagonist brethren inspite of the dictations from their supreme leader Golwalkar. It may be said that the hidden and covert opposition of the Punjabi *Suba* demand by the RSS was due to their consideration that such demand on the part of the Akalis was meant to establish the Sikh hegemony. The Hindu nationalists were actually not so much against the demand of Punjabi *Suba* as evident from the sequence of the events that followed it, as also by the Golwalkar's declaration, but were against any possible Sikh domination.

But, in the end the Punjabi *Suba* became an accepted reality and the Hindu nationalists were beaten by the Akalis in the political bout. However, there were some reasons to it. Firstly, the *Sangh* was not as effective in mobilizing the Hindu community in opposition to the Punjabi *Suba* movement as the Akali Dal was in mobilizing the Sikh community. Secondly, though there were internal divisions between the Hindu and the Sikh protagonists, but divisions were severe among the Hindu camp where *Sangh* faced serious problems in consolidating and unifying Hindu opinion i.e. between Haryana Hindus and urban Punjabi Hindus; between those concerned primarily with the Hindu cultural interests (central leadership) and those concerned with political power and economic interests i.e. between local perspective and broader perspective of vital Hindu interests. Moreover, with the progress of the movement from early 1950's to mid 1960s, the Haryana sentiment among the Hindus of eastern and southern Punjab became stronger than the Maha Punjab

sentiment of the Punjabi Hindus. This was due to the fact that the Hindu nationalist and the Aryas had been organized primarily among the Punjabi speaking Hindus in the leading cities of Punjab, *viz.* Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana.⁶⁰ However, the Haryana sentiments have had support in the towns and even in the rural areas of Haryana.⁶¹ So inspite of single ideology, the Punjab and Haryana units of the *Sangh* were working against each other. And finally, when it became clear that the reorganization of Punjab was unavoidable, the *Sangh* leadership quickly moved to an accommodating stance, which would maximize Hindu opportunities and gains.

RSS and The Cow Protection Movement:

The cow protection had always been an emotional issue with the Hindu nationalists. The RSS consistently referred to the need for the ban on the cow slaughter in its resolutions implying that it would serve cultural, religious and economic ends. The demand for the ban on cow slaughter started immediately after the independence by the different Hindu organisations and the RSS was also a party to it. The *Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha* (ABPS) of the RSS, for the first time passed a resolution to this effect in 1952. The resolution stated:

"The ABPS expresses its keen sense of disappointment at the muddled policy of the Central Government *vis-à-vis* the issue of cow protection. The issue of cow protection is not merely an economic question for our country; it is a point of cultural sanctity and a symbol of national oneness (...) The Sabha calls upon the *swayamsevaks* to organize meetings, processions and such other programmes with a

60. Paul Brass, *op. cit.*, P.332; Also see Krishan Gopal Lamba, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

view to give powerful expression to the feelings of millions all over the country and thus making obligatory upon our democratic government to bow to the will of the people and impose a total ban on the slaughter of the cow and her species".⁶²

The RSS and the organisations of the similar ilk were constantly pressing upon the government to declare cow slaughter illegal and a criminal activity. Though they accepted that in the constitution it was mentioned only as a Directive Principle of State Policy. The RSS was supportive of Dr. Sita Ram Committee report on the issue of cow slaughter. The Committee was appointed by the U.P. government to look into the whole issue but its report was not published. The report of the Committee was however, against the cow slaughter and the RSS put it as a case in support of their argument.⁶³

Punjab too was not untouched by the echo of the campaign which was building up in the Hindu belt (cow-belt). For instance in Patiala, the campaign was launched by Babu Dalip Chand, the *sanghchalak* of the Patiala region. In his efforts, he even got the signatures of the Muslims and the Christians against the cow slaughter. He had asked the RSS workers of the region to collect hundred signatures everyday of the people in support of their movement.⁶⁴ The initial response to the cow protection campaign in this state was quite satisfactory. This was perhaps by the virtue of Punjab being an agricultural society and therefore, the farming

62. RSS Resolves, 1950-2007, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 4, 5.

63. *Organiser*, October 5, 1954.

64. *Organiser*, November 3, 1952.

community was quite receptive and sensitive to the issue. Both Hindus and the Sikhs were sympathetic towards the matter and therefore, supportive. The Punjab RSS together with the BJS and the Arya Samaj along with some minor Hindu groups formed '*Gohatya Nirodh Samiti*' (though this volunteer organization had its core in the cow belt) in mid 1950s to channelize the campaign. Lala Hardeo Sahai, one of the leading figures of the *Samiti* criticised the chief minister of the Punjab, Bhim Sen Sachar, regarding his statement that 'the slaughter of kine and sale of beef shall not take place except subject to rules to be framed from time to time, either generally or in any particular instance prescribed by the local government'.⁶⁵

The Punjab RSS adopted every common place measure to sensitize the people regarding the whole issue. Various district, tehsil and *nagar pracharaks* were made incharge of the campaign in their respective areas. The good old practice of *prabhat pheris* (morning processions) common among the Punjabis during the religious and festive occasions) were put into practice in the towns and the villages. The songs eulogizing *gaumata* (mother-cow) were sung in order to raise religious sentiments of the people. The lines of one of the popular song in Punjabi thus go:

*"Gaumata aj raundi aye, karlandi aye,
Zalim zulm kamunda, pesh ni jandi aye."*

dholkis, chhenas, etc. were beaten while chanting these songs and every effort was made to include as many people as possible irrespective of their caste and religion. The literature, which included the pamphlets, brochures, advertisements in the newspapers and the

65 *Organiser*, February 28, 1955.

magazines, was used to disseminate the campaign among the masses.⁶⁶

The central leadership of the RSS expressed its satisfaction with the whole campaign. The *Kendriya Karyakari Mandal* of the RSS in its resolution passed in 1958 congratulated the *Gohatya Nirodh Samiti* for its successful campaign of mobilizing public opinion through out the length and breadth of the country on the issue of banning cow slaughter.⁶⁷ The issue of banning cow slaughter and the ensuing movement, however, was not continuous. In spite of various efforts, this campaign in Punjab remained the poor cousin of the bigger issues and agitations *viz.* language controversy and Punjabi *Suba* movement. This campaign really accelerated in the mid 1960s by the efforts of the organization called '*Bharat Gosewak Samaj*' (India Cow Servant Society). To chalk out the future course of action, this society organized two days All India *Goraksha Sammelan* (Cow Protection Conference) at Vrindavan, in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh in August 1964.⁶⁸ The RSS was the important constituent of this organization and the Conference. The in-between years from the launch of cow protection movement and this *Sammelan*, the campaign went through a lean patch in 1960. But the RSS in spite of being engrossed in other issues didn't sideline this matter. In its resolutions number 2 of the year 1960, it reiterated its demand for the total ban on the cow slaughter. It proposed to amend the constitution for said purpose because it believed that unless a categorical reference to ban cow slaughter was made in the constitution, protection of this sacred point of national honour was not possible.⁶⁹

66. Interview with Chajju Ram Sab.

67. RSS Resolves, op. cit., pp. 12,13.

68. Bruce Graham, op. cit., p. 148.

69. RSS Resolves, op. cit., p. 22.

The Conference of 1964 boasted the participation of the several prominent personalities of the *Hindutva* cult. The notable was Prabhudatt *Brahamchari* also known as *sant* of Jhusi, who suggested that if the central government would not impose a ban by the given date a peaceful but nationwide agitation would be started. Others included were the *Jagat Guru Shankaracharyas*, three state governors (One of them was the Muslim governor of Orissa, Syed Fazal Ali) and three central ministers. The RSS *sarsanghchalak* M.S. Golwalkar inaugurated the Conference and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the RSS and the BJS ideologue, spoke on the occasion.⁷⁰ This conference was the stupendous show of the strength by the *Hindutva* fraternity, which forced the central government to ponder seriously over the whole issue. In the very next month, Punjab became the centre of attraction when *Jagat Guru Shankaracharya* of the Goverdhan monastery, located in Orissa (Puri) presided over the conference at Amritsar, which demanded the ban on cow slaughter by a parliamentary legislation.⁷¹ The noteworthy aspect of this conference was presence of RSS cadres in large number. In fact, the Punjab RSS was at the helm of affairs in organizing this event. The *prant pracharak* Anant Rao Ram Chander, incharge of the *swayamsevaks*, was directing the RSS activities. The *prant sanghchalak* Lala Hansraj; the *prant karyavaha* Jitender Veer Gupta; *sharirik vibhag pramukh* Vishwanath (later on became the *prant pracharak* of the Punjab RSS); *boudhik vibhag pramukh*, Madal Lal Virmani (a prominent writer of the Punjab and former editor of the *Pathik Sandesh*, RSS magazine published from Jalandhar) and Narayan Das were some other personalities connected to the *Sangh*. These people too directed their energies for the success

70. *Organiser*, August 31, 1964.

71. *Statesman*, Delhi, September 8, 1964.

of this convention by giving instructions to the *swyamsevaks* in their respective areas to sensitize as many people as possible regarding the whole issue. They also worked for bringing common masses from the far off places of the Punjab of this convention at the expenses of the RSS.⁷²

The grand finale of the campaign came in 1966 at New Delhi where the cow protection groups successfully mobilized their resources and the general public for another attempt to bring about total and comprehensive ban. On September 5, they held a large demonstration outside the Parliament House. Interestingly, the demonstration was being led by Govind Dass, a Congress M.P., who submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Minister, Gulzari Lal Nanda asking for the central legislation to ban cow slaughter.⁷³ A former *swyamsevak* and the then BJS M.P. in Lok Sabha, Swami Rameshwaranand created disorder in the House on the issue, but was eventually suspended from the Lok Sabha for the remaining session.⁷⁴ In the meantime another umbrella organization called *Sarvadaliya Maha Abhian Samiti* was also established under the presidency of Prabu Dutt Brahamchari, who warned the central government of the mass arrests of one lac people and the fasts unto death at tehsil and district levels if their demands were not conceded.⁷⁵ Guru Golwalkar was also one of the key figures of the *Samiti* who successfully mobilized RSS cadres for the occasion.⁷⁶

On November 7, Delhi witnessed a huge demonstration organised by the *Sarvadaliya Goraksha Maha Abhiyan Samiti*. The

72. Interview with Vishwanath.

73. *National Herald*, September 6, 1966.

74. P.D. L.S. (Third Series), L IX, September 5, 1966, CC 9217-19.

75. *Organiser*, September 25, 1966.

76. Interview with Ram Singh.

chief attraction of the procession was the display of the stupendous collection of the papers bearing signatures of the people from every nook and corner of the country. The packs of the signatures were arranged province wise on 22 bullock carts. Thousands of uniformed *swayamsevaks* on bicycles, trucks and on foot accompanied them. While addressing a closely packed gathering of over one lack citizens at *Ramlila* grounds, Golwalkar declared that a government could not be considered a self government so long as it allowed the slaughter of the cow, the highest point of national honour in Bharat.⁷⁷ A large contingent of the *swayamsevaks* from Punjab led by the *prant pracharak* and *sanghchalak* was added to the show of strength and solidarity. The Guru of *Namdhari* Sikhs, Pratap Singh Maharaj was also a delegate and presided one of the many sessions.⁷⁸ The RSS *sarsanghchalak* while addressing the crowd announced that the entire collection of the signatures was effected in just four weeks. The number of signatures collected were 1,75,39,813; and the number of villages contacted were 81524.⁷⁹

Inspite of the professedly non violent means, the massive demonstration organized by the RSS and allied organization outside the Parliament House turned violent when the agitators forcibly tried to enter the Parliament. This lead to the arrests of around 1450 persons including Balraj Madhok, a former RSS *pracharak* and the BJS national president at that time.⁸⁰ Many *swayamsevaks* from Punjab zone too were among those who were detained and later on granted bail while some others were released immediately after the arrests

77. H.V.Sheshadri, *RSS: A vision in Action*, Jagrana Prakashan, Bangalore, 1988, p. 266.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 267.

80. Bruce Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

due to non-availability of the evidences.⁸¹ Nevertheless, by this time many state legislatures have passed the legislation imposing ban on cow slaughter and the central government on its part was trying to persuade reluctant states to comply with the Article 48 of the Constitution.⁸²

Foreign Aggressions and The RSS : 1962 and 1965 Wars.

Indo-China War of 1962:

The year of 1962 witnessed Chinese aggression of India from the North East i.e. NEFA and Ladakh. The communist China for last 13 years since its inception in 1949 was consistently following the policy of expansion.⁸³ The RSS claimed that its chief Guru Golwalkar had earlier warned the central government regarding the Chinese intentions when Chou-en-Lai had come to India.⁸⁴ In 1960, the *Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha* of the RSS passed a resolution *vis-à-vis* Nehru-Chou-en-Lai parleys. The RSS in this resolution urged the government and all other countrymen to undertake all such measures deemed necessary for safeguarding the country's territorial integrity and checkmating the evil designs of the expansionist powers. The RSS also called upon the *swayamsevaks* to rise to the nation's will and endeavour to make the people whole heartedly participate in the task of strengthening all sinews of nation's defense.⁸⁵

When China attacked in 1962, the RSS treated her as an aggressor and therefore, a belligerent country. It viewed that such attack on the part of China was meant to aid and abet armed

81. Interview with Vishwanath.

82. Bruce Graham, op. cit., P.155

83. For the greater details, please see D.R.Mankekar, *The Guiltymen of 1962*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1988. Also refer to Parshotam Mehra, *Essays in Frontier History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007.

84. Interview with Yashpal Mehta.

85. RSS Resolves, op. cit., pp. 19, 20.

revolution in India through her fifth columnists.⁸⁶ The RSS at this juncture criticized the government's vacillating policy and appealed to the central government to reject Chinese ceasefire proposal of November 21, 1962, summarily.⁸⁷ Besides other exhortations such as cultivating close relations with the neighbouring countries against China, reshaping economic policy, freedom of Tibet and such other things, the RSS appealed to the people of India to increase their saving to meet the demands of the war and other future eventualities. They should made contributions to the National Defence Fund, generously. Also the RSS viewed that the partisan politics should not come into the way of tackling national emergency. The RSS vigorously criticized the Indian communists for their manoeuvres to weaken the nation's will and disrupt the forces of national unity. It also accused them of unleashing hatred and vilification campaign against them through the press by the means of fabricated news and concocted out of context statements.⁸⁸

Though the state of Punjab was away from the actual theatre of the war which was being fought on the eastern borders of India, still it contributed towards the war efforts. The RSS notwithstanding its general anti-Congress and particularly anti-Nehrurian stance, realized the imperative need of the unity of all patriotic forces and believed itself to be one of them. It supported the Nehru government's gagging of criticism for the national interests and recognized the need and desirability of the stable and strong government to win the war. In Punjab, the RSS directed its *swayamsevaks* to enlighten the people regarding the Chinese invasion

86. Interviews with D.P. Gupta.

87. RSS Resolves, op. cit., pp. 27, 28.

88. Ibid., p. 30.

and prepare them for the civil defense, if situation demanded.⁸⁹

The processions by the RSS were organised in the principal cities of the Punjab, viz. Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Moga, Bathinda, etc. to stir patriotic fervour among the people. By the means of *Guru Dakshina* (offerings made by the *swayamsevaks* to the RSS fund) campaigns *swayamsevaks* collected funds and deposited it into the government war fund. At Amritsar, D.P.Gupta, an important RSS functionary who later on became *prant karyavaha* of the Punjab RSS organized a camp to collect money, blankets and clothes for the Indian soldiers. At Pathankot and Jalandhar blood donation camps were organized for the soldiers. Every possible assistance was provided to the army at Pathankot, Jalandhar, Jammu, Yol, Bathinda and Ferozepur cantonments. During the war time, processions and *prabhat pheris* were taken through the roads and the streets of the towns and the cities of Punjab which sang patriotic songs. The lines of one of the popular song thus go:

*"Jag de rehna veer javanon eh dharti avtaraan di,
Chot na lag jave Ma de sine te gaddaran di"*⁹⁰

Another important aspect of the RSS attitude during the war was the way in which Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh reacted. As it is well known, the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh is a labour affiliate of the RSS, which was organised primarily to channelize labour energies into the *Hindutva* direction and also as counterforce against the communist affiliated labour unions. During the war it withdrew all agitations against the government regarding labour demands. The pending demands were put off for the time being. All the workers affiliated with this union were given a call to step up defence production on

89. Interview with Ram Singh.

90. Interview with D.P.Gupta.

priority basis and to assist all defence efforts. The policy of the RSS and its affiliate Mazdoor Sangh was the clear cut indication of their viewpoint regarding Chinese aggression, which the labour organisations affiliated to the left were often found silently supporting. That was why the RSS was often found accusing the communists and their unions of unpatriotic and anti-Indian stance when question with China arises.⁹¹

The RSS and the Indo-Pak war of 1965:

The second challenge to the national integrity came again within three years, when the Kutch affair with Pakistan turned murkier and Pakistan started a dispute with India over nearly 9000 sq.km. of the Indian territory. The conflagration of the dispute was due to the criminal negligence and lackadaisical attitude on the part of the Indian government. The RSS along with its affiliates, most prominent among them was the BJS, organized mass rallies, processions and demonstrations all over the country on July 4, 1965. This was done in order to create public awareness about the grave implications of the 'Kutch Agreement' and to register their protest. On the issue, the RSS was against the British proposal that Indian government agreed to for referring the dispute to the Arbitration Tribunal.⁹² It observed that day as 'Anti-Kutch Agreement Day'. Huge public meetings were organised at Ludhiana and Jalandhar where the copies of the agreement were publically burnt.⁹³

Further, the RSS on August 16, 1965, organised a mammoth protest rally in Delhi outside the Parliament House in which

91. Interview with Thakur Baldev Singh.

92. H.V.Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

93. S.S.Parihar, 'The History of Bhartiys Jana Sangh in Punjab', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1987, p. 206.

the M.P.s of the several political parties including the Samyukta Socialist Party and the Republican Party, along with several independents joined the BJS leaders in renouncing the Kutch Agreement.⁹⁴ The '*Statesman*' described the rally as "by far the biggest ever witnessed in the Capital so far", '*Dainik Hindustan*' and the '*BBC*' put the gatherings at half a million, the '*Broad Way Times*' usually critical of *Sangh Parivar* described the rally as the biggest protest march the capital had ever seen.⁹⁵ The *Kendriya Karyakari Mandal* of the RSS in its resolution of 1965 accused Pakistan of violating the ceasefire agreement of September 23, 1965. It further said that under the cloak of ceasefire it was preparing for another aggression. And the RSS always believed that the peace and normalcy were inconceivable without the establishment of *Akhand Bharat*.⁹⁶

The doubts of the *Sangh* proved true when Pakistan attacked in the month of September 1965 and the Punjab and the Kashmir sectors became the main centres of the armed conflict. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister of India personally rang up Golwalkar who was then touring Maharashtra and requested him to be in New Delhi for the All Leaders Conference. At the conference, Guru Golwalkar extended full cooperation on behalf of the *Sangh*⁹⁷ and when one of the representatives while addressing Shastri kept on saying 'your army' Golwalkar corrected him with sharp reminder, 'say our army'.⁹⁸ As the Punjab sector was one of the main theatres of the war, so the province witnessed discernible commotion. The *Sangh*

94. H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p. 32.

95. Quoted in ibid. pp. 32, 33.

96. RSS Resolves, op. cit., pp. 44, 45.

97. Ibid., p.33.

98. Ibid.

swayamsevaks organized four canteens on the border within the shelling range of the enemy. The villagers of the nearby areas donated huge quantities of milk free of charge and also supplied meals prepared in *desi ghee* to these canteens where hundreds of jawans took their food. On September 8, when the government authorities wanted clothes for the large number of injured soldiers, these were provided in just four hours and at this juncture the two RSS *swayamsevaks* who were also the MLAs of the BJS from that area (Baldev Prakash and Balramji Dass Tandon) rendered useful service.⁹⁹

There were few other incidents of the war in Punjab when the RSS *swayamsevaks* provided yeoman's service to the army. In Ajnala sector the RSS *swayamsevaks* under the leadership of the local *pracharak* (who later on became *sanyasi*) helped army by carrying their ammunition to the front lines.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in the Bhikiwind area an army convoy which was moving with the batch of *swayamsevaks* alongwith one D.P. Gupta (who later on became *prant karyavaha* of the Punjab RSS and whom i interviewed extensively) was bombarded by the Pakistani warplanes. Here the *swayamsevaks* along with the soliders took part in the retaliatory action (here quasi-army like training given to the *swayamsevaks* came handy).¹⁰¹ Similarly, in the border district of Ferozepur, a former *swayamsevak* and the then Jana Sangh MLA, Kulbir Singh, whose village was situated in the border area just near the theatre of the war refused to budge from the area and also encouraged the villagers not to leave their homes and exhorted them to face the enemy onslaughts. He also urged them to help the army fighting in that sector with all possible

99. Ibid., Also interview with D.P.Gupta.

100. Interview with Ram Singh.

101. Interview with D.P. Gupta.

moral and material where withal. Similarly, in Fazilka, a border town with the population of 40,000, Satyadev, the local MLA of the *Jana Sangh* and an erstwhile *swayamsevak*, continued to stay in the town in the wake of heavy bombardment. Eventually, hardly 5000 people stayed on in that town and most of them were the *swayamsevaks* and their families.¹⁰² In another case, the *pracharak* of Fazilka, Jagdish Raj Kakkar organised a civil defence in the area and was instrumental in providing logistical help to the army.

Once again the RSS resorted to songs for keeping the people's morale in upswing. One of the songs that used to be sung was,

"Balidan kahaunda hai, desh te marna dharam te marna".

These types of patriotic songs were routinely sung in the morning and evening *shakhas* throughout Punjab. The combat training was given to the *swayamsevaks* during the *shakhas* in case of any eventuality. The night vigils were carried out in the streets, cities, towns and villages in case of enemy para-trooper landing in the area. The blackouts ordered by the government were religiously observed and the RSS *swayamsevaks* too offered their assistance for carrying it out.¹⁰³

It is noteworthy that during the war period the RSS efforts and ideas towards the war were supplemented by the *Sangh shiksha varga* (training camp) which was progressing in Punjab. In this camp, the important functionaries of the RSS from Punjab and from the central level were participating. The main leaders of the *Sangh* who addressed the *swayamsevaks* in this camp included, Lala Hansraj Gupta (*prant sanghchalak*), Dharamvir (*sanghchalak*), Jitenderveer Gupta (*prant karyavaha*), Anant Rao Ram Chander (*prant pracharak*),

102. Interview with Satyadev at Ferozepur on March 23, 2007.

103. Interview with Balvir Sharma and Madan Lal Virmani.

Vishwanath (*sharirik vibhag pramukh*), Madal Lal Virmani (*boudhik vibhag pramukh*), they were the provincial RSS functionaries. The other invited leaders from the central level were the *sarsanghchalak* Guru Golwalkar, Narinderjeet Gupta (*sanghchalak* of U.P.), Girijaj Sharma (Rajsthan *prant pracharak*), Eknath Ranade, A.B.Vajpayee, Sunder Singh Bhandari, M.R.Muley, D.D.Upadhaya, Bhaurao Deoras and Balasaheb Deoras. Besides, general *boudhiks* on various facets of the national and the social life, the current issues afflicting Punjab which included the ongoing Indo-Pak war and lingering Punjabi *Suba* movement were also deliberated. They exhorted the *swayamsevaks* for creating Hindu-Sikh amity and helping the government machinery in the war efforts. Though they had their reservations regarding both the issues and more often than not they were critical of government's policy.¹⁰⁴

Along with providing the military help, various kinds of civilian jobs were also performed by the *swayamsevaks*. For example, in Pathankot and several other towns of Punjab, *swayamsevaks* manned traffic and performed some other general police duties so that the police might be available for more pressing tasks. Ever since the beginning of the war, batches of the *swayamsevaks* daily reported to the military hospitals to offer blood. The army authorities had been already asked to ring up the *Sangh* office at any moment in case of any need. There was an instance of the Pathankot, which housed one of the biggest army cantonments of Asia where the *swayamsevaks* ferried army ammunition from the army depots to the trains which were to be dispatched to the front lines. Besides this, at important railway stations, the RSS *swayamsevaks*, Vidyarthi Parishad, Lions

104. RSS records at RSS Archives Amritsar. Here an old anonymous hand written account of the *shiksha varga* is available.

Club, Rotary Club, municipalities and panchayats arranged small canteens providing the army convoys, with meals, milk, tea and various other necessities, which passed through those stations.¹⁰⁵ When the fighting ended, General Kulwant Singh told a *Sangh* worker, "If Punjab is a sword arm of India, then *Sangh* is a sword arm of Punjab".

After the conflict was over and the ceasefire was declared, the Soviet Union persuaded both the countries to meet for talks at Tashkent in January 1966.¹⁰⁶ The RSS in principle was opposed to the Tashkent talks and Golwalkar at this juncture sent a message to the Prime Minister urging him not to proceed. However, when the Prime Minister went ahead with the talks, Golwalkar sent him a letter through A.B.Vajpayee, wherein he urged him to stand firm by the commitments he had made to the people.¹⁰⁷ The 'Tashkent Declaration' was signed on January 10, 1966 and the RSS apprehended that "by agreeing to withdraw our armies from our own areas in Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan like Hajipur, Titwal and Kargil, we have of our own accord seriously undermined our firm stand held till now *vis-à-vis* Kashmir". It further viewed that "Tashkent Declaration has neither helped in improving the *Bharat* Pak relations nor it has safeguarded the interest of our country".¹⁰⁸ But overall, the RSS policy at this stage was one of supplementing the government's war efforts and providing every available service to the national cause though at times it became wary of government policies.

105. *Organiser*, September 19, 1965.

106. Bruce Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

107. H.V. Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 36.

108. *RSS Resolves* *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 50.

109. *RSS Resolves* *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 51.

Conclusion:

The period of fifteen years from 1952 to 1966 was one of constant, hectic socio-political activity in Punjab. The RSS by the virtue of its antecedents could not stop itself from involving. It came up strongly in the second half of 1950s from the hiatus of the first half when its membership saw gradual decline. And after setting its own house in order, it jumped into the quagmire of the issues afflicting Punjab and its people, predominantly those involving the Hindus. In the wake of the language controversy and the Punjabi *Suba* agitation, apparently it didn't enter into direct confrontation with the Akalis, but its political face BJS was in sabre rattling mode along with the Aryas. So the RSS got involved itself in the movement clandestinely without taking the responsibility of its individual *swayamsevaks*.

Like the earlier history of the RSS and its involvement in the issues of those times, ideologically the RSS always gave preference to the sentiments, emotions and feelings then to the reason and thinking. Therefore, the central leadership with Golwalkar at the helm of affairs had to do some serious exercise in controlling the RSS affairs in Punjab. He toured extensively and himself urged the Punjabi Hindus to declare Punjabi as their mother tongue and to denounce those who were artificially constructing the Hindi climate by linguistically manipulating the Punjabi Hindus. Again when the Maha Punjab and the Punjabi *Suba* issues confronted each other the RSS adopted cautious approach. Though, in principle it was in the favour of united Punjab, but simultaneously it didn't want to antagonize the Sikh community whom it considered an inalienable part of broader Hindu society. It was also discernible during this period that the local RSS leadership and its cadre vociferously raised their voice regarding the issues on which the central leadership kept mum or at the best acted diplomatically. However, the RSS viewed the violence out- breaking in

1966 during the climax of the movement as dangerous with grave implications for the Punjab's peace and unity. It urged 'Sikh and non-Sikh Hindus' to work amicably for solving the problem in an atmosphere of goodwill and urged sects and sub sects among the Hindu-Sikhs, Arya Samaj, Sanatanis and others to eschew conflicting actions.¹⁰⁹ When the Punjabi *Suba* became a foregone conclusion, it accepted it un-cheeringly in the best interests of the state. They consoled themselves by feeling that the division of the state had been done on basis of language and not religion though it rankled somewhere in the recesses of their minds that the Akalis had been victorious in their covert communal agenda. Apart from the regional issues of the language and land, other issues with the national repercussions *viz.* cow slaughter issue; Indo-China and Indo-Pak wars confronted the Punjab RSS. In the best interests of the country and itself to survive as a force to reckon with and also to prove its patriotic credentials, it cooperated with the government. However, the RSS was critical of government's lackadaisical attitude towards these pertinent problems. But it was careful and often reluctant to use the methods of public protest to challenge the government's authority. Though there were exceptions to this. But it knew its own incapacities and resources available at the disposal of the government (the brutal oppression it suffered from the government in the wake of Gandhi's murder was still fresh in the memories of the RSS leaders).

This period also witnessed a shift in the RSS policy. It carefully shifted itself from the centre stage to the back stage and diplomatically delegated its functions to its affiliates, importantly, the B.J.S. in the political field and VHP in the religious field. This was well thought strategy on the part of the *Sangh* to fall back on more productive mission of man making. It was continuously endeavouring to find its roots in Punjab like that of a tree which was sown in 1935-

36, bloomed fully in 1940s, but wilted a bit in early 1950s due to various causes and most important of these were division of the Punjab (i.e. division of India in 1947) and Gandhi's murder. Again the conflicting interests of Punjab and Haryana Hindu before the reorganization of 1966 limited the RSS appeal and impact in the region, when the RSS leaders of region often took opposite sides (again more emotionality than practicability). After the division, the RSS base in the Punjab shrunk more because Hindus now were in minority in the Sikh dominated Punjab and that too concentrated in the cities and the towns. So to regain its earlier aura, the Punjab RSS now started doing some serious painstaking groundwork.

Chapter 6

The RSS From: 1966–1984

In the previous chapter we deliberated on the various issues, which created a charged atmosphere in Punjab with the Hindu nationalists on one side of political spectrum whereas, the Sikh leadership on the other. The socio-political dynamics of Punjab and the changed demographic pattern resulted in the new set of priorities. The work of the RSS and its political manifestation the Jana Sangh too experienced a paradigm shift in their stance and ideas. In this chapter therefore, an essay would be made to know and understand the activities of the RSS and their resultant effect on the Punjabis, in general and the Hindus, in particular. The array of activities during the period from 1966 to 1984 *i.e.* the time frame for this chapter will include: an attempt by the RSS to widen its base in the new Punjab; its attitude towards the Indo-Pak war of 1971, the setback it suffered with the death of Golwalkar in 1973; the Emergency and its role in the Total Revolution of J.P.; its experiences during the Janta regime; and the most important of all, its attitude and response towards the Punjab terrorism. So the responsiveness of the RSS *vis-à-vis* these above-mentioned issues will form the crux of the present chapter which would ultimately pave the way for the concluding chapter.

As it has been already mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis that Punjab was a witness to the prolonged communal antagonisms right from the British years to the terrorism days. During the course of its history the Hindu nationalists often got themselves pitted against the other communities. The Hindus, of whom the RSS claimed itself a platform, were now in minority. The RSS by this time was depleted in its ranks as the Hindu majority areas were now assimilated in Himachal Pradesh or carved out as separate Haryana.

So the area of interest for the RSS now, was a relatively new terrain, the Punjab countryside with its large concentration of the Sikh population. Also adjusting to the new realities, the RSS now started demanding honourable place for the Hindi though no aversion towards the Punjabi. This however, what we can call the real politik of the Hindu nationalists who by this time had acknowledged their secondary position *vis-à-vis* ever assertive Akalis with whom they forged electoral understanding in the years to come.

Inter-communal Parleys: The Hindu Nationalist way:

The process of differentiation had not resulted in the complete separation of the two communities, either in social structure or culture. As some political organizations had fostered separatism, others had worked towards inter-communal communication. The Arya Samaj and the RSS (Jana Sangh) had been the important mobilising forces among the Hindu community in the pre and post 1947 Punjab. However, the RSS or for that matter the Arya Samaj could not achieve pre-eminence as the sole representative of the Hindus and a consolidating force like the SGPC *vis-à-vis* the Sikh community. The Hindus were a divided house in Punjab and this frictioned the way of the Hindu nationalists who were still trying to retrieve their pre 1947 position.

If we look at the ground situation in the second half of 1960s, the covert dejectness of the RSS seemed discernible. Although, they had reconciled with the fresh realities, yet they were trying to regain their lost ground. The Congress regime of Punjab, who played monkey among the cats, came down heavily on the RSS *swayamsevaks* who were protesting against the reorganization. Regarding the issue, the RSS deputation saw Gulzari Lal Nanda and pleaded against the arrest of five hundred *swayamsevaks* by the Punjab Government. They alleged that the *swayamsevaks* were being

tortured in the jails. The prominent RSS leaders who were in the deputation included *Lala* Hans Raj (*prant sanghchalak*), Anant Rao Gokhale (*prant pracharak*), Jai Kishan Dass (from Sonipat) Bahadur Chand (from Panipat) and Prakash Dutt Bhargava (advocate from Delhi).¹

An important *Hindutva* ideologue and an erstwhile *swayamsevak*, Balraj Madhok assumed the presidentship of the Jana Sangh in 1966. In the thirteenth plenary session at Jalandhar (on April 30, May 1, 2) outgoing Bachraj Vayas handed over the mantle to him in this biggest ever *Jana Sangh* meeting.² Madhok's less rigid and more pragmatic views helped in moderating the virulent anti Punjabi *Suba* views of his fellow *Sanghites*. In his presidential address he exhorted his cadres to prevent Aryas and Akali extremist elements to further aggravate the difficult situation.³ This exercise was perhaps meant to calm down the temper of the Sikhs who considered the RSS as anti Punjab and anti Punjabi. In the newly formed government in 1967, the electoral understanding between the Akalis and the *Jana Sangh* is paved the way for the RSS to experience political power for the first time in Punjab with some of the *ex-swayamsevaks* (e.g. Baldev Prakash was made the deputy chief minister) becoming ministers.⁴

As stated in the previous chapters that Golwalkar had a keen eye and interest in Punjab and on the progress of the RSS here. He along with his periodic visits and regular *tête-à-tête* with the

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1. *Organiser* April 3, 1966. Also see *Hindustan Times*, March 24, 1966.
 2. *Organiser*, April 13, 1966.
 3. 'Presidential Address of Balraj Madhok', issued by *Bhartiya Jana Sangh Central Office*, Delhi, 1966.
 4. See for greater details, Craig Baxter, *The Bhartiya Jana Sangh: The Biography of an Indian Political Party* Pennsylvania University Press, Philadelphia, 1969.

swayamsevaks and other non- RSS people kept tab on the Punjab situation. His correspondence reveals various aspects of his personality and also the fact that no one is pariah in cultural politics, character of the RSS. The allegation on the RSS that it had a soft corner for the princely states was proved by a letter written by Golwalkar to *Maharaja* Yadwinder Singh of erstwhile Patiala state. The contents of the letter revealed amicable and amenable relation between the two whereby Golwalkar acknowledged the non availability of the *Maharaja* for the RSS function due to his (*Maharaja's*) prior fixations.⁵ In another letter to one Pran Malhotra dated on August 24, 1967, who was the then secretary of the Swatantara Party, Golwalkar lauded him by saying that inspite of being attached to specific party which did not owe its allegiance to the RSS, his soft corner for the *Sangh* was commendable. He (Golwalkar) very well understood the practical implications of indulging in the activities of the RSS due to his affiliation towards a different political group, the letter stated.⁶ Further, as the *Jana Sangh* was consolidating itself in the urban areas of Punjab, Golwalkar while congratulating Mitrasen, an important *Sanghite* of Punjab, asked him to make '*Jana Pradeep*', the *Jana Sangh* organ, the propagator of nationalism.⁷

Golwalkar's correspondences coupled with his visits helped the RSS cause in the new Punjab in a positive way. Golwalkar had always made it a point to tour Punjab at least once a year. These Punjab sojourns sometime went upto three depending upon the prevailing circumstances. So now this new policy of rural thrust of

5. M.L.Virman (ed.), *Shri Guruji: Punjab Mein*, Hindi translation of the letter dated on April 2, 1967.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 40. Also see *Shri Guruji Samagra*, 12 Volumes, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 2004.

7. *Ibid.* Also *Shri Guruji Samagra*, Volume-7, op. cit., p. 350.

expansion forced the RSS chief to develop a close liaison with the Sikh leadership although this was in continuum to the RSS's old policy.⁸ During one of his many visits in late 1960s, Golwalkar had a special meeting with Sant Fateh Singh. The RSS publications and its leaders gave much publicity to this meeting in which Golwalkar and *Sant* were photographed while embracing each other. The RSS sources claimed this meeting as a meeting of two great souls, both '*keshdharis*'. The RSS sources also claimed that *Sant* Fateh Singh at this juncture made a pronouncement that 'who says Sikhs are different, they are also Hindus.'⁹

Golwalkar in 1968 visited Punjab twice, first in the month of January and then in October. The second visit was occasioned for the zonal camp (*prantiya shivir*) of the Punjab RSS (which included the states of J & K, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi). This camp was held at Nangloi near Delhi in which approximately seven thousand *swayamsevaks* participated. On this occasion, he addressed the *swayamsevaks* on various national and social issues afflicting the Hindu nation.¹⁰ The very next year *i.e.* in 1969, Golwalkar again visited Punjab, but this time the centre of activity was Chandigarh and occasion was the eve of retirement from active social life of Babu Dalip Chand, *vibhag sanghchalak* of Chandigarh.¹¹ In the month of December he toured Ludhiana. In the year 1971, he toured Punjab

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8. Master Tara Singh was invitee in the function organized during the foundation of VHP at Sandeepani Ashram, Bombay in 1964. He also happened to be one of its founder members.
 9. *Sankranti Ka Shubh Sandesh*, Boudhik Vibhag, RSS Punjab Prant, (n.d.), p. 4.
 10. M.L.Virmanied op. cit., p. 53.
 11. Babu Dalip Chand was the father of Justice Jitender Veer Gupta of Punjab and Haryana High Court who was also an important RSS functionary. Before shifting his base to Chandigarh, Babu Dalip Chand was an active RSS member at Patiala in the erstwhile PEPSU.

thrice. First visit was in April (2 to 4 April) when he had a meeting with the RSS functionaries of Punjab at Amritsar; second visit was in June (11 to 13 June) when he addressed the *swayamsevaks* at Jalandhar who were participating in the Instructors Training Camp (*adhidari shiksha varga*); third was his general tour of Punjab in October (20 and 21 October).¹² In one of the rallies while addressing about ten thousand *swayamsevaks*, Golwalkar asked them to strengthen the country by shedding the distinctions of caste, language and parochialism.¹³

More than usual attention and importance given by the top RSS leaders, particularly Golwalkar testified the increasingly desperate attempts of the RSS to strengthen its base in Punjab. The nearly perfect electoral understanding with the Akalis coupled with increased penetration in the rural area proved beneficial for the RSS particularly in recruiting the Sikhs, whom the RSS always considered as *keshdhari* Hindus. The electoral alliance between the Hindu nationalists and the Akalis for the municipal elections (in which the Jana Sangh emerged very successful due to its wide urban Hindu base) further consolidated the position of the *Sangh* and therefore their rural thrust was not so much chagrined by the latter.¹⁴ The new

12. M.L.Virman, op. cit., p. 67. Also see Pradeep, March 27, 1971.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Organiser*, October 15, 1967. Also see *Hindustan Times*, January 21, 1969. The newspaper asserted that there was deep understanding for elections between the Akalis and Jana Sanghis. The liaison with the Akalis helped in increasing the acceptability of the Jana Sangh and in its guise of the RSS. However, inspite of overt love, Akalis were increasingly getting apprehensive of the RSS clout in their traditional vote bank. These mutual suspicions were true in those times as also in todays scenario when during the Local Bodies election of 2008 widespread violence was witnessed in Punjab among the long time coalition partners the BJP and the Akali Dal.

found success prompted *Sangh* and the Akalis to demonstrate the Hindu-Sikh unity. The erstwhile political *bete noire* Yagya Dutt Sharma and *Sant* Fateh Singh were in frequent consultation on party matters. However, the extremists on both sides were not happy with the compromised positions and it was Arya Samajists in the case of Hindus who were disenchanted.¹⁵ Therefore, as of now it seemed that the Hindu nationalists had come a long way in adjusting to the changed Punjab situation in the accordance with their agendas and times.

The love-hate Akali and *Sangh* relationship notwithstanding, the RSS was now seriously reaping the harvest of its past labour and present endeavours. There was a case of one Kartar Singh Rathore, a Rajput Sikh, who later on assumed the office of the general secretary of the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh's Punjab unit. He came into a contact of the *Sangh* in 1966 at Patiala and became a full timer of the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh in 1967. However, inspite of his devotion to the cause of this labour union affiliated to the RSS, there were some serious doubts still lingering in his minds. These doubts were related to the communal character of the RSS and, therefore, he started thinking of parting his ways. This was precisely the time when the Hindu-Sikh question and their interests (communal) were clashing with each other. But a marked change in his thought process came when he met Golwalkar in 1971, during latter's sojourn of Punjab. At their *rendezvous* in Ludhiana, the *sarsanghchalak* asked him three questions first, 'If he considers Guru Gobind Singh as communal?' Second, 'If he considers the work done by him as communal?' And lastly, 'Is the *Sangh* communal?' The answers given

15. Statesman, Delhi, June30, 1967.

by Kartar Singh to all these questions were in negative. After that meeting he decided to read the literature written by Guru Gobind Singh to check out the real answers to these questions. He read the books like *Chandi Di Var*, *Jafarnama*, *Akal Ustat* and *Vichitar Natak* and arrived at the conclusion that the work of Guru Gobind Singh and of *Sangh* was one.¹⁶

In the early years of 1970s, the Punjab RSS started *Gram Sampark Abhiyan*, an exercise meant for increasing the RSS's penetration in the rural areas and among the rural folk. However, it was understood that the Hindu population in the rural areas was concentrated into the few pockets, so the real motive of the *Sangh* was to target the rural Sikhs. The *pracharaks* were dispatched to the rural areas of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ferozepur and Abohar. An attempt was made to recruit more and more Sikhs as *pracharaks* and to send them to villages so that the gullible rural folk might not feel communally and ideologically assaulted.¹⁷ Similarly, the Sikh intellectuals were roped by the RSS in their public functions so that it could demonstrate both its admirers and detractors, that it didn't differentiate between the Hindus and the Sikhs. So in the *Guru Dakshina* programme (An event organized for voluntarily donating money the receipts of which are never disclosed and the offering is made to the Saffron Flag [*Guru*]) organised by the Punjab unit of the RSS, the vice chancellor of the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar was invited to preside over the ceremony. While delivering his presidential address Bishan Singh Samundri (the V.C.) lauded the RSS for its sense of duty and selfless national service and

16. M.L.Virman, op. cit., pp. 59, 60.

17. Interview with D.P. Gupta.

discipline.¹⁸

In an another exercise, which was incidental and not deliberate, the RSS chief while giving an interview to Kushwant Singh, a renowned Sikh columnist and literati, cleared many apprehensions and doubts that were usually housed in the minds of the non-Sanghites. Kushwant Singh himself acknowledged his deep distrust and hatred towards the RSS and Golwalkar because of their communal nature bent on making secular India, a Hindu kingdom. But on his *rendezvous* with Golwalkar he could not help but feeling impressed by his persona and later on with his views. He described him as an Indian Ho-Chi-Minh. This was precisely the time when Golwalkar was recovering from cancer. Kushwant Singh further said that after the meeting, he understood that Golwalkar's mind was open to other's thoughts and perhaps he might persuade him for fostering Hindu-Muslim amity in India.¹⁹

The chauvinism of one affects the catholicity of the other. The repeated attempts of the Hindu nationalists to rope in more and more Sikhs in its worldview were marred by the increasingly separatist and chauvinistic overtones of the Akali leadership. This resulted into the breakage of Akali - Jana Sangh coalition. The Hindu nationalists, therefore, started criticising the Akalis. The short-lived amity born after the vicious struggle for the Punjabi *Suba* was restored again only during the anti-Emergency struggle against the Congress in which both Akalis and the *Sangh* were equal partners. By this time the Congress was on reckoning and in the general election of 1972 it trounced its rivals comprehensively. Further, the RSS efforts

18. *Organiser*, October 10, 1970.

19. The full text of interview was narrated in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, November 17, 1972.

to widen its base received a severe jolt by the tougher attitude of the central government, more so after the revelation made in the home ministry report which depicted that the RSS had become the largest association of the volunteers in the country.²⁰ According to this report the membership of the RSS in Punjab was 9000²¹ though the actual figures might have been much more. But as long as the Akali - Jana Sangh government worked in Punjab, it remained a safe haven for the RSS activists who were carrying on with the missionary zeal. Also, the accusation of riot mongering on it was unfounded in Punjab.²² However, in not so far off Delhi, a two month ban was imposed on the practice of physical exercises, in uniform or without it, with or without *lathis* or any other weapon, or objects resembling one, by a group of five or more persons in a public place.²³ Further, the functionaries and the active members of the RSS were to be kept in strict vigil, it was said.²⁴ The RSS resisted this extraordinary strict vigilance and Hansraj Gupta, the *prant sanghchalak* drafted a petition and submitted it to the president with four lac signatures on it.²⁵

The strict vigilance of the central government was coupled with increasingly separatist postures of the Akalis (though Akalis termed it as struggle for more 'autonomous powers') created tougher conditions for the RSS. More so, after the assumption of political power in Punjab by the Congress and the return of Akalis to

20. Statesman Weekly, September 6, 1969.

21. *Ibid.*

22. The home minister Y.B.Chavan had accused Jana Sangh for its involvement in Ahmedabad riots. See Statesman Weekly, October 11, 1969.

23. Times of India, June 23, 1970.

24. National Herald, July 11, 1970.

25. Christophe Jafferlot, *The Hindu Nationlist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s*, Viking, Delhi, 1996, p. 239.

their agitational tactics this created a queer situation for the Hindu nationalists. During these times of hectic political parleys came 'Anandpur Sahib Resolution', a comprehensive charter of demands made by the Akalis on behalf of the Sikhs in their meeting at Anandpur Sahib on October 16-17, 1973.²⁶ There were different versions of the resolution, which were interpreted differently.²⁷ The moderate Sikhs (like *Sant* Fateh Singh) took it as, simply an extension of demands hitherto not conceded during the Punjabi *Suba* movement (like Chandigarh and Punjabi speaking villages' inclusion). But there were others who interpreted it as a demand for an autonomous Sikh dominated state within the Indian Union. And yet others construed it as a demand for an independent, sovereign Sikh state to be named *Khalistan*.²⁸ However, the Hindu nationalists, the focus of our study, looked upon this charter of demands as an attempt of the Akalis to put on the mask of democracy to hide their autocratic ways. They termed the concoction of language, religion and province as a step further towards the separatism and called this measure as a retrogressive step.²⁹ Some Sanghites viewed this resolution as a document of treason; a blank check for *Khalistan* aimed at further division the nation for political sake.³⁰

26. Kshitish, *Storm in Punjab*, The World Publications, Delhi, 1984, p. 129. Also see Kushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, Volume-2*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 342.

27. In this study we are not going into the details of this Resolution as it was widely debated topic and in the Punjab specific studies we can see various versions and interpretations of the issue. Also the newspapers of those times carried their coverage on the specific issues of the Resolution and prominent were *The Tribune* and *Hind Samachar Group*.

28. Kushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 342, 343.

29. *Jujhta Punjab, Samajik Ekta Prachar Manch*, Jalandhar, (n.d.), pp. 14,15.

30. Interview with anonymous RSS and Jana Sangh leaders whose names are withheld on request.

Apart from terming the Anandpur Sahib Resolution as separatist, the RSS also chagrined the fact that in one of its clauses ban on the RSS was sought nation widely.³¹ Generally, only some of the harmless demands had been discussed in the newspapers and the word *Khalistan* was conspicuously absent. But in reality, according to them, there were demands, which were too senseless to be taken seriously.³² Though not in a position to resent much, the Hindu nationalists preferred to keep a low profile and concentrated more upon their socio-cultural programmes as the situation was not much in their favour. They neither outrightly condemned the Resolution as a whole nor they were vociferous in its support. As the alliance partner of the Akalis they preferred not to embarrass them. However, internally they were aware of the mischievous character of the Resolution and double speak of the Akalis.³³

While referring to this Resolution, Kushwant Singh said, "When the Akalis were in power, as they were when the Anandpur Resolution was formally passed and again during the Janta regime, they did not exert much pressure on the central government to have it accepted. They kept it as not too secret weapon in their archives, to be brought out and brandished when they were out of power and use its non acceptance as a grievance justifying agitation".³⁴ He furthered his argument thereby justifying the doubts of the Hindus, in general and Hindu nationalists, in particular. He said, "The one snag in their argument was that being a purely Sikh party, they never tried to gain

31. Interview with Kashmiri Lal, former RSS *prant pracharak*. Also see Kshitish, op. cit.

32. For details on this point please refer to Kshitish, op. cit., pp. 218, 219.

33. Interview with anonymous RSS personnel at Delhi on October 3, 2007. Names withheld on request.

34. Kushwant Singh, op. cit., P. 348.

the support of Punjabi Hindus and thus tainted their demand with a communal colour. There was also the irritating reference to the Sikhs being a separate *qaum*.”³⁵ This concept of separate *qaum* was always shunned by the RSS in its thought process for the Hindu nation and therefore, it was not surprising that even during the hay days of terrorism, they kept on chanting the slogan that 'the Sikhs are *keshdhari* Hindus', nonchalantly. However, the Punjab terrorism, the logical predecessor of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, and the RSS world view and responsiveness towards it, will be dealt in the later part of his chapter in greater detail.

The RSS and the Indo-Pak War of 1971:

The nation suffered another test when the war of Bangladesh liberation with Pakistan broke out in December 1971. The war was being fought both on the eastern front and the western front of India. On the western front Punjab again witnessed hectic activities ranging from troop mobilization to the rescue operations. The RSS as in the earlier wars, this time also pledged its full support to the government. The RSS chief Golwalkar at this juncture advised the government and the people that at least now they should be shaken out of their illusion that an appeal to the so-called international conscience would work wonders. Here, he was vividly critical of the Indian stance of presenting Indo-Pak dispute to the UNO. He was in favour of adopting tough posture *vis-à-vis* Pakistan's belligerence and stated that the Indian aim should be clear, as declared in the *Shastras*, 'no *shatru sesh*', residue of the enemy should not be allowed to remain.³⁶

35. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

36. H.V.Sheshadri, *RSS: A vision in Action*, Jagran Prakashan, Bangalore, 1988, p. 37.

Prior to the above said declaration of the RSS chief, the *Kendriya Karyakari Mandal* (KKM) of the RSS passed a resolution regarding Pakistan's genocide in Bangladesh in 1971. The resolution stated, "The K.K.M. expresses its deep sense of agony at the deplorable condition of the millions of the destitute and suffering people of Bangladesh created as a result of demonic action of the Pakistan government. It is true that Hindus, Muslims and Christians and all others equally suffered and lakhs of them were butchered in the first round of brutal repression (...) In its second round, Pakistan has begun a systematic genocide of the Hindus (...) Already over seven million Hindus have crossed over to Bharat (...) The Big powers who never tire of claiming to be champions of democracy, human values and justice, being blinded by their own narrow self interest kept mum over this worst genocide in human history (...) It would be in consistent with the declared ideals and values and sense of national self-respect and interest to remain a passive spectator to the suppression. (...) The K.K.M. urges the Government to take strong and immediate measures in keeping with its basic stand (...). The people will whole heartedly support any such action. (...) The K.K.M. appeals to the people to cooperate fully with the relief measures undertaken by the government (...)"³⁷

In the later part of 1971 the K.K.M. of the RSS passed another resolution *vis-à-vis* Bangladesh crisis. In the resolution underlining India's (*Bharat* in RSS terminology) duty *vis-à-vis* Bangladesh problem, it said, "(...) with a view to divert the attention of its people from these internal conflicts Pakistan has, as usual, striven to depict the Bangladesh crisis as one of India's making, and

37. RSS Resolves, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 68, 69.

has worked up war-hysteria among its people, with the result that there is an imminent threat of Pakistani aggression of our country. The K.K.M. calls upon the government of India to display courage and firmness in case Pakistan launches upon such a desperate course (...). The call given by the Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi to the people to sink their petty political differences, rise above party interests and unitedly face the imminent challenge is most timely and fitting. The K.K.M. urges the people to maintain internal peace and order and cooperate whole heartedly with the government as well as the armed forces (...) The K.K.M. also expect that all the *swayamsevaks* of the *Sangh* will, as in the past, remain in the vanguard of the peoples efforts in the cause of the national defense."³⁸ This resolution amply shows that RSS had already girded up its loins to meet the Pak challenge and to stand by the government with the might of its cadres which it demonstrated on eastern (Bangla Border) and western (Punjab, Rajasthan and J&K Border) front.

The Punjab RSS and the War-Effort : Some Instances.

During the war as on previous occasions, hundreds of *swayamsevaks* throughout Punjab pledged their services with the authorities for every kind of mobilization of the civilian support. On December 3, 1971, Madhav Rao Muley, the RSS *sehsarkaryavaha* while addressing the *swayamsevaks* at Panchayat Bhawan Chandigarh said, "Due to the circumstances in Bangladesh, Pakistan can attack our western borders at any time. The war is not fought by the army only. People also have to cast their share."³⁹ He further said, "The kind of firmness that Prime Minister is showing entrusts that she will lead the

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

39. Suraksha Ke Morche Par: Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh, Punjab, Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh Punjab Bhag, Jalandhar, (n.d.), p. 1.

country in a right manner during the crisis period." ⁴⁰ He called upon the *swayamsevaks* and said, "You should not wait for the government's call for assistance. You should meet the government officials yourself and whatever work they assign you, it should be done whole heartedly." ⁴¹

Madhav Rao Muley along with the Punjab *prant pracharak*, Anant Rao Gokhale, *bhag pracharak* of Punjab Narayan Das and *bhag karyavaha* of Punjab Mitrasen addressed similiar gatherings of the RSS workers at other districts of Punjab *viz.* Ludhiana, Patiala, Ropar, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Abohar, Bathinda, *etc.* ⁴² This tour was started on December 3 and was intensified during the peak of Pakistani aggression. On December 4, these leaders addressed the *swayamsevaks* of Ferozepur, Bathinda and Sangrur districts at Moga and asked them to participate fully in the war efforts. ⁴³ Similarly, on December 5, they addressed the gathering of the *swayamsevaks* from Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar, at Jalandhar. ⁴⁴ On December 6, at Amritsar and on December 7, at Pathankot where the *swayamsevaks* of the Gurdaspur district had gathered. Thereafter, they moved towards Jammu where similar exercises were undertaken. ⁴⁵

As soon as the war broke out, the Punjab *prant sanghchalak* Hansraj Gupta wrote letters to the president, the prime minister and to the governor of Punjab and Haryana assuring them of

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.* And also interview with Vishwanath at Amritsar on September 10, 2006.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

43. Interview with Dinanath at Ferozepur on March 23, 2007.

44. Interview with Balwant Singh at Jalandhar on September 2, 2006.

45. Interview with Chajju Ram Sab at Pathankot, on December 28, 2007.

full support of the *swayamsevaks*.⁴⁶ In a same fashion the Punjab *prant karyavaha* Jitender Veer Gupta (later on became the chief justice of Punjab and Haryana high court) and Punjab *bhag karyavaha* Mitra Sen issued a statement directing the *swayamsevaks* to meet the government officials at their respective places and pledged their every kind of help to them.⁴⁷ Dilip Chand (father of Jitender Veer Gupta) *bhag sanghchalak* of Punjab *prant* met the governor of Punjab and the chief commissioner of Chandigarh in this regard.⁴⁸

From December 13 to December 16, 1971, Bapu Rao Moghe, the *pracharak* of Uttranchal accompanied by the Punjab *bhag pracharak* Naryan Dass and *seh-prant pracharak* Ram Singh, toured the border areas of Punjab and bucked up the *swayamsevaks* commanding them not to leave their respective places.⁴⁹ On December 16, when Moghe reached Ferozepur he sighted that many people had already left the city but the *swayamsevaks* of the area were helping the district authorities in maintaining the law and order situation. On the same day at Muktsar, they inspected the camp where the migrants from Fazilka area were sheltered. The RSS leaders appealed the local people to reserve one room in their houses for the migrants of the war. Thereafter, Moghe and other RSS leaders on December 15 visited Fazilka and Kotkapura, of which Fazilka was completely deserted baring few people and the government officials, of which some were the RSS *swayamsevaks*. On December 18, Moghe went to Amritsar and visited Amritsar's Rajasansi Airport where he presented woolen caps, electric heaters and various edible items to the Airforce

46. Surakasha Ke Morche Par, op. cit., p. 2.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Interview with Ram Singh at Jhandewalan, Keshav Kunj, New Delhi on October 3, 2007.

commander, for the pilots, on the RSS's behalf. They then reached Ajnala and visited Chogavan village, which was the actual battleground on the border. On December 16, they visited Gurdaspur, Batala and Pathankot along with Dera Baba Nanak and Fatehgarh Churian. On December 17, they left Punjab for Jammu, however, in the meantime ceasefire was declared.⁵⁰ On December 18, Ram Singh in the company of some RSS workers visited the areas of Shakargarh tehsil (erstwhile this tehsil was in Gurdaspur district but now it is in Pakistan), which had been won by the Indian army. In the town Sukhochak of the same tehsil *swayamsevaks* performed RSS prayer at the same place where shaka in the pre-partition days used to held.⁵¹ This was perhaps the short-term fulfillment of the RSS dream of *Akhand Bharat* which they cherished since their inception and were never came to the partition terms.

Instances of different districts:

1. **Amritsar:** In the city, one week before the broke down of the war, *nagar sanghchalak* Kuldeep Chand and district *karyavaha* Ved Prakash Mahajan met the C.M.O. (chief medical officer) and assured him of much needed blood donation. In the 30 odd first aid centres of the city the *Sangh* workers worked along with the government staff. Further, the district *sanghchalak* after his meeting with D.C. assured the availability of two thousand *swayamsevaks*, ready for any type of duty. In order to keep the morale of the people high *swayamsevaks* started moving in the groups through the streets of the city singing patriotic songs. On December 12 *swayamsevaks* performed march past through the city in full uniform. Ram Singh visited the border line villages from Ajnala to Khemkaran sectors and urged villagers to stick

50. Suraksha Ke Morche Par, op. cit., p.2.

51. Ram Singh, op. cit.

to their place.⁵² On December 4, under the leadership of district *sanghchalak*, Goverdhan Lal Chopra, seventy *swayamsevaks* donated blood. In totality around five hundred *swayamsevaks* offered themselves for the blood donation but only two hundred and fifty actually donated it.⁵³

For the war efforts various *samities* were formed in the city in which various RSS personnels were taken. The names of some of them are as under:

1. The district *sanghchalak*, Goverdhan Lal Chopra was taken in *Amritsar nagrik sabha* (Amritsar Citizens Committee).
2. Pran Nath Khanna was taken in *punarvas samiti* (rehabilitation committee).
3. Baldev Chawala was taken in medical *up-samiti* (sub-committee).
4. Jamana Dass Arora was taken in vittiya *up-samiti* (financial sub committee).⁵⁴

Besides the above mentioned efforts various other general helpful and philanthropic activities were also undertaken by the RSS in Amritsar. For instance, under the leadership of Jugal Kishore Goenka and Pran Nath Khanna rehabilitation assistance work was started for which blankets, quilts and warm clothes were collected from the city people and were presented to the deputy commissioner.⁵⁵ In Majitha, the uprooted people were provided with food and shelter and four miles from Patti on Khemkaran - Khalada road, a canteen was established. At Attari and on Amritsar railway station similar canteens were put up which provided towel, vest,

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Suraksha Ke Morche Par*, op. cit., p. 3.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Interview with Goverdhan Chopra at Amritsar on August 12, 2007.

brush, tooth paste and other personal toiletries to the wounded soliders along with the dry fruit packets. On the actual war front in Ajnala sector tehsil *sanghchalak* on the request of tehsildar along with twenty other *swyamsevaks* carried ammunition boxes by crossing river Ravi and handed them over to the forces fighting there. In Amritsar night vigils were organised and about three hundred and twenty five *swyamsevaks* took training in the civil defence.⁵⁶ One Om Prakash Kalia with some other *swyamsevak* polished the headlights of the vehicles at city squares. On December 19, *i.e.* after the war was over and Indian forces emerged victorious eight hundred *swyamsevaks* march past the city in full RSS attire.⁵⁷

Gurdaspur: On December 4, the *swyamsevaks* met the local and the district, government authorities and offered their services. At Pathankot district *sanghchalak* Jagannath and Jaikrishan Sharma met A.D.C. Gurdaspur, Bindra. Similarly, the district *karyavaha* Niranjana Das Bhandari, Dev Bushan and Jai Krishan Sharma met S.D.M. Gurdaspur and S.D.M. Batala and presented the services of the RSS at their disposal. At Pathankot, the RSS leader Janak Raj Mahajan received letter from the S.D.M. Shiv Singh inviting the RSS cadres for blood donation. The S.D.M. himself appealed the RSS *swyamsevaks* for assistance and the blood donations while he was addressing them at Keshav Sangh Sthan, (RSS office) Pathankot.⁵⁸ Gurdaspur, by the virtue of its being a border district was engulfed in tension due to which many people had migrated. To keep the morale of the masses high the RSS undertook march pasts (*path sanchalan*) at Pathankot,

56. Suraksha Ke Morche Par, op. cit., p. 4.

57. Interview with Om Prakash Kalia at Amritsar on August 12, 2007.

58. Interview with Janak Raj Mahajan at Pathankot on December 26, 2004.

Dinanagar, Gurdaspur, Batala and Dhariwal. Jai Krishan Sharma addressed *swayamsevaks* at these places. Morning and night processions (*prabhat and ratri pheris*) were also undertaken. After the war broke down, in order to safeguard, the city was divided into eight parts and about one hundred twenty *swayamsevaks* played key role in this. At Dinanagar, the president of the municipality, Gurbachan Singh was made the chief warden and among others twenty *swayamsevaks* of Dinanagar helped him. Similarly, at Batala, Madan Lal, the municipal council president, was made the chief warden and about three hundred *swayamsevaks* presented themselves to him for town's vigilance and protection.⁵⁹

The blood donation camps were organised at many towns of the Gurdaspur district where the *swayamsevaks* presented themselves. At Pathankot, seventy *swayamsevaks* went for blood donation out of which blood of thirty-seven was taken. At Gurdaspur, one hundred listed them for the purpose and ten of them actually donated. At Batala, two hundred and fifty listed themselves and twenty actually donated the blood. For the civil defence, the district government authorities had made six *samitis* (committees) at Pathankot, Dinanagar, Gurdaspur, Dhariwal, Batala and one district security advisory committee (*Zila Suraksha Slahakar Samiti*). At Pathankot six, at Dinanagar ten, at Gurdaspur five, at Dhariwal six, at Batala ten and in the district committee four *swayamsevaks* were taken as the members. At Gurdaspur, Dhariwal and Batala, *swayamsevaks* organised canteens for the army men. In the border villages, which had been affected by the war, the RSS started langar (community kitchen) services. The daily necessities were donated at

59. Suraksha Ke Morche Par, op. cit., p. 5.

various places in the district, e.g. at Gurdaspur and Batala sixteen quilts were donated to the military hospital. At Pathankot, three hundred and forty blankets and quilts, fifty cots, two hundred tooth pastes, four hundred and fifty soap cakes, one hundred ball pens, two hundred combs one hundred mirror were donated. Likewise at Batala also, two hundred and twenty five blankets and quilts, three hundred bed sheets, fifty shaving sets, two hundred spoons, plates and bowls were donated by the RSS to the wounded soliders.⁶⁰ At the border village of Marada one doctor *swayamsevak* Kewal Krishan provided medical help to the soldiers at the battlefield itself. Similarly, at Bamiyal and Narot Jaimal Singh *swayamsevaks* kept the morale of the people high and urged them not to migrate and should provide every kind of help to the soliders.⁶¹

On December 14, the Gurdaspur tehsil *pracharak* , Surinder Singh, along with some other workers of Dinanagar visited the occupied area of Pakistan adjoining the Gurdaspur district, Nainakot. At Qadian, whose three soliders had been martyred in the war was given assistance in the kind of ration and money. One Ram Prakash Prabhakar of citizen security forum (*nagrik suraksha parishad*) was instrumental in organising this help. Similar kind of assistances was given in the towns of Batala and Fatehgarh churian, where community kitchens (*langars*) were setup for the soliders and the uprooted border area people.⁶²

Hoshiarpur: On December 6, prominent RSS workers of the city met Deputy Commissioner and offered the RSS help. *Prabhat pheris* were taken out in which patriotic songs were sung to raise patriotic fervour.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

61. Interview with Mulakh Raj at Narot Jaimal Singh on June 15, 2005.

62. Interview with Ashok Prabhakar at RSS head office, Keshav Kunj, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, on October 3, 2006.

Similar activities were carried out at Mukerian, Talwara and Dasuya. The night vigils were organised by the RSS workers in the localities of these towns. At Dasuya, seven *swayamsevaks* took rifle training and at Hoshiarpur seventy seven *swayamsevaks* presented them for traffic control and took three days training for this task. At Dasuya, the RSS organized one day close (*bandh*) in condolence to the martyrdom of Lt. Hardev Nayar. At Mukerian *swayamsevaks* caught hold of a spy and handed him over to the authorities. Ten *swayamsevaks* at Mahilpur, fiftyone at Dasuya, twenty eight at Talwara, seventy seven at Hoshiarpur got their name listed for blood donation. On December 19, *swayamsevaks* of Hoshiarpur march past the city in full RSS uniform.⁶³

Jalandhar: Here, Sardar Wattan Singh, the district *sanghchalak* of the RSS met district authorities and assured them of the RSS's services. Wattan Singh himself was the representative of the RSS in the citizen security forum (*nagrik suraksha samiti*). Alamgirpur, a village destroyed by the Pakistani bombardment near Adampur was quickly provided relief by the government authorities in whom *swayamsevaks* actively participated. At Kartarpur the RSS ran an eatery for the soliders. In the security arrangements at Jalandhar cantonment for the civilian population, *vibhag sanghchalak* of Banga, Pyare Lal Bansal along with Desraj and Ram Lal took participation alongwithwith forty other *swayamsevaks*. Similarly at Nawanshahar, Balraj, Vaid Shakti Kumar, Devender, and Kasturi Lal of the RSS were the members of the city security committee (*nagar suraksha samiti*). Fifty *swayamsevaks* took part in the night vigils and one hundred one offered their names for blood donation. After victory, the RSS at

63. Suraksha Ke Morche Par, op. cit., p. 6.

Banga undertook march past in which two hundred and twenty five *swayamsevaks* participated.⁶⁴

Bathinda: Under the leadership of district *karyavaha* Om Prakash Gupta, a delegation of the RSS met deputy commissioner Ashok Sen and offered their services. The posters regarding the war were printed and distributed in the villages to enlighten the people. At Faridkot, Kotkapura, Jaito, Mansa, Budhlada, Baretta, Rampura Phul and Balanwali *swayamsevaks* undertook night vigils. At Rampura Phul four hundred and one *swayamsevaks* listed themselves for the blood donation. At Kotkpura a doctor named Om Prakash Grover (*sanghchalak*) was appointed as the chairman of the city committee (*nagar samiti*). Similarly, at Bathinda, Rampura, Mansa and Budhlada, Om Prakash Gupta, Amrit Lal, Kedarnath and Baru Ram, respectively, were taken in the committees, from the RSS. At Bathinda railway station, since October, an eatery had been started which worked continuously till the end of the war. Thirty-six *swayamsevaks* were the whole-timers there and capacity wise in a single go this eatery could serve food to about five thousand soliders. Similarly, at Rampura Phul one and at Faridkot two such eateries were set up. At Ferozpur and Fazilka, food and shelter arrangements were made for the uprooted people. The victims of the bombardment at Bathinda too were taken care off. On the request of deputy commissioner daily necessities were distributed by the RSS.⁶⁵

Ludhiana: A delegation comprising of Lajpat Rai, Ved Prakash Dua, Jagdish Chander Kalia, Charanjiv Singh, Krishan Chander Rana and others met deputy commissioner and offered the services of the

64. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8. Also interview with Dinanath at Ferozpur on March 23, 2007.

Sangh. At railway station, a service centre was opened by the RSS which worked for twenty hours a day with the help of two hundred and fifty *swayamsevaks*. Here a temporary lodging arrangement for about one thousand five hundred families was made. A canteen was established near the bye-pass where about one thousand soliders were provided with food, tea, biscuits, eggs *etc.* daily. This canteen was even visited by the Punjab governor Pavte, speaker Darbara Singh, inspector general of Police Ashwani Kumar and the deputy commissioner. On December 19, the RSS march past the city to celebrate victory. The *vibhag sanghchalak* Lajpat Rai wrote a letter to the deputy commissioner giving the names of one thousand two hundred and fifty *swayamsevaks* for the blood donation. At Jagraon, the *swayamsevaks* were mobilised in an hour and about twenty five of them protected Halwara Airport and Cheema Radar along with the government authorities. The *nagar karyavaha* of Jagraon, Amrit Lal presented the names of one hundred and seven *swayamsevaks* for blood donation. A canteen was also established at Raikot. Similar kind of social service work was done at Doraha, Payal, Khanna, Samrala, Machiwara and Mullanpur. The RSS claimed that their work here was widely appreciated by the common masses and the government authorities.⁶⁶

Patiala: A delegation of the RSS under the leadership of district *sanghchalak* met the government officials and offered their services. The names of two hundred and fifty *swayamsevaks* were given for the blood donation. The *nagar sanghchalak* Gupta promised to donate fifty thousand multivitamin tablets to the medical authorities as a help on

66. *Ibid.*, p.8. Also, telephonic interview with Chiranjiv Singh at Delhi. Interview with Ashok Talwar (ex-chairman Khadi Board, ex-district president of BJP) at Moga on September 2, 2007.

the RSS's behalf. The arrangements for the night vigils other assistances of the similar ilk were also made. Some of the *swayamsevaks* deputed themselves in the hospital for serving the admitted soliders. The similar kind of services were performed at Nabha, Samana, Amloh, Mandi Gobindgarh, Sirhind, Rajpura, Dera Bassi and other places. *Prabhat pheris* and free canteens were also the features of these services.⁶⁷

Ropar and Chandigarh: At Ropar, the *nagar karyavaha* Mahender Kumar was appointed as deputy chief warden. Out of twenty-four wardens of the city, thirteen were the *Sangh swayamsevaks*. Two hundred *swayamsevaks* did night vigils during that period, thirty took training in the fire extinguishing and for city protection and thirty-five *swayamsevaks* donated blood. A song was used by the RSS to arouse patriotic fervour during those times, which goes like,

"Khoon diya hai, magar nahin di, kabhi desh ki maati".

The *swayamsevaks* were imitated by the college students in donating blood. Kurali, Morinda and Kharar too witnessed similar hectic activities on the part of the *swayamsevaks*. At Chandigarh without getting approval from the government officials the *Sangh* itself started preparations for strengthening the second line of defence. Jitender Veer Gupta addressed the workers on December 4. Babu Dalip Chand Gupta met the governor, Pavate and assured him of the RSS's assistance in the time of need and Brij Bhushan Singh Bedi, the district *karyavaha* met the then home secretary S.N.Bhanot. These RSS leaders swiftly undertook hundred meetings in the city which were attended by four thousand people. Two hundred and fifty RSS workers totally worked for the war-time services. Twenty

67. Suraksha Ke Morche Par, op.cit. p. 9.

swayamsevak doctors offered their services for the blood donation camp and a list of two hundred and fifty *swayamsevaks* was given by Jitender Veer Gupta to the medical authorities and many of those listed actually donated blood.⁶⁸

Kapurthala: On the morning of December, the S.D.M. Kapurthala arrived at the *Sangh shakha* and addressed the rally of the *swayamsevaks*. At Shahkot, the *swayamsevaks* took rifle and home guard training. The night vigils were organised and forty *swayamsevaks* gave their names for the blood donation. At Phagwara, in the presence of the SDM Arjun Singh the *swayamsevaks* undertook a rally in the full RSS attire. In the citizen security committee the RSS was represented by Satya Pal Sobti, Om Prakash Aggarwal, Balwant Rai and Mohan Lal Handa. Again a list of two hundred twenty six *swayamsevaks* was given for the blood donation. Besides this, five hundred shirts, five hundred pyjamas, one hundred blankets and two hundred and fifty packets of the items containing chappals, pastes, tooth brush, towels, *etc.* were also offered to the district authorities. On December 12, fully dressed *swayamsevaks* performed parade at Phagwara to keep the morale of the people intact.⁶⁹

Sangrur: The RSS leader of Sangrur, Hans Raj Goel met D.C. and assured him of *Sangh's* help. The duty of protecting railway lines at Dhuri, Barnala, Ahmedgarh and Sangrur, was bestowed upon the *swayamsevaks* by the D.C. *Parbhat pheris* were taken out at Sangrur and Sunam. Eight *swayamsevaks* were taken as the wardens and thirty six other were taken in the various committees at Ahmedgarh, Malerkotla, Dhuri, Sangrur, Sunam, Lehragaga and at some other

68. *Ibid.*, p. 9. Also interview with Harmahender Singh at Amritsar in October, 2005.

69. *Surakhsha ke Morche Par*, op. cit., p. 10.

places. Five hundred *swayamsevaks* presented their names for the blood donation. A canteen was also set up in Sangrur for the soliders. The houses and the relatives of forty-five soliders were identified and were provided with the help of every possible kind.⁷⁰

Ferozpur: When the news of the war broke down, on December 3, tehsil *pracharak* of Abohar Jagdish, *karyavaha* Pritam and some other *swayamsevaks* met the area Magistrate, Roopinder Singh Dua and offered him the RSS's support for the city and civilian security duties. In the important towns of the district street meetings were held, e.g. in Moga five and in Muktsar, eight such meetings took place. The local *shakhas* distributed pamphlets depicting the ways of protection from the air attack. Fifty-five village *panchayats* were provided with these posters through post. The night vigils and the vigil against spies were conspicuously followed by the RSS. Fifty *swayamsevaks* of Muktsar donated blood at Fazilka and a list of ninety other ready for the blood donation was given to the medical authorities. Similarly, fifty, one hundred and fifty, fifty and fifty *swayamsevaks* of Moga, Abohar, Ferozpur and Malout, respectively listed their names for the blood donation. There was an instance of three real brothers of a village, twenty-three miles away from Fazilka, who on their bicycles went all the way to Fazilka for blood donation and came back to their village on bicycles only.⁷¹

After the beginning of war in many towns of the district various refugee and assistance camps were set up. These refugee camps were established at Fazilka, Jalalabad, Ferozpur, Ganganagar, Hindumalkot along with the special assistance camps at Muktsar and

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*, p. 11 and also interview with Dinanath.

Malout. The Malout camp functioned from December 5 to December 20, where boarding, lodging and every other kind of daily requirement was provided to the uprooted border area people. This camp was also inspected by the chief advisor to the Punjab governor, Inderdev Sahi along the local C.M.O. This camp catered about five hundred people. Similar was the case with Muktsar and Moga where five hundred people were catered in two local dharamshalas. On the arrival of the armed forces in various towns of the district, the RSS along with other civilian population made arrangements for their refreshment. These refreshment points were set up in the towns of Fazilka, Talwandi, Ferozepur, Baghapurana, Abohar, Muktsar, *etc.* In the military hospital of Faridkot sweets were distributed among the wounded jawans. On the victory eve *swayamsevaks* at Muktsar displayed drill under the leadership of *karyavaha*, Madan Lal. On December 19, Abohar's S.D.M. Bhupinder Singh visited the *Sangh shakha* and lauded the efforts of the *swayamsevaks* during the war. Again at Abohar, Gulab Rai the tehsil *sanghchalak* helped the authorities in capturing a woman spy, similarly at Ferozepur, the *Sangh* workers got hold of two spies roaming in the guise of ascetics.⁷²

This depiction of RSS work during the war shows that it never missed the opportunity to prove its patriotic credentials before the people and the government. Again, the peculiarity of its quasi-military nature came handy during those fateful days, which demanded more than layman's patriotism from its citizens. At this juncture, the RSS itself acknowledged that though it was not in the good books of the government who, as always, looked upon it as some thing subversive to the national unity but still they did their duty. They also

72. *Ibid.*, Also see H.V.Sheshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

accused the government of deliberately ignoring it whereby creating circumstances for its (RSS) self assertion (for war efforts) without the government's approval.⁷³

Demise of Guru Golwalkar and the changed RSS orientation:

In the first half of 1970s, the efforts of the RSS to maximise its clout in Punjab met with serious hurdles due to some of its own limitations and also due to the socio-political atmosphere of the state. Even though, it gained considerable credibility due to the services offered by it during the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971, but still its road in Punjab was far from smooth. To make the matters worse as mentioned in chapter 1 the *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS, Guru Golwalkar, passed away in 1973 while he was recovering from cancer. But now the times were changing, situations were complicating and the new man set to take the charge was an activist, named Bala Saheb Deoras (refer to chapter 1).

The death of Golwalkar came as a big loss for the RSS struggling at this juncture in Punjab. His death was condoled by his friends and detractors alike.⁷⁴ The Akali leader and *Jathedar*, Santokh Singh said that the death of Golwalkar had caused a big loss to the Sikh community. The newspapers of Punjab too were not behind in paying their tributes to him. *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, described Golwalkar as an uncommon personality and saint like figure who did not need t.v., radio and newspapers to show his acumen. *Lala Jagat Narain* of *Hind Samachar Group*, Jalandhar, too offered his obituaries to him and recalled his meeting with Golwalkar on the eve of Indo-Pak war of 1965, when an all party meeting was taking place at New Delhi. *The Veer Pratap*, Jalandhar said that the death of *Guru* Golwalkar

73. Suraksha Ke Morche Par, op. cit., p. 12

74. This list of obituaries is detailed in M.L.Virman, op. cit.

ended a chapter in the history of the RSS. He wanted to build India on the basis of ancient traditions. The *Hindu Saptahik*, Jalandhar, too echoed the similar feelings. A Muslim weekly *Radiance* also paid its tribute to Guru Golwalkar and called him a saintly figure and his death as a sad event for all, even though his philosophy was not appreciated much by the Indian Muslims.⁷⁵

The RSS and the Internal Emergency: 1975 to 1977

The independent India on June 25, 1975, came face to face with the grim challenge of the Internal Emergency which was clamped by the ruling regime. "My world lies in shambles all around me. I am afraid I shall not see it put together again in my life time", wrote Jai Prakash Narayan in his prison diary while he was detained in Chandigarh in the wake of Emergency.⁷⁶ The prime minister Indira Gandhi ordered the arrest of political opponents and imposed censorship on the press. The apparent reason given by the government for this drastic measure was grave internal threat to the internal security of the country by the subversive activities of governments' political opponents and prominent among those were Jai Prakash Narayan and the RSS (and its family). The government in early 1975 charged that the RSS and its family of organisations were the force in a movement supporting the "Total Revolution" of J.P. and that was not without justification.⁷⁷ The RSS, though itself was not initially involved in the J.P.'s Total Revolution but its political affiliate,

75. *Radiance*, June 17, 1973.

76. Quoted in H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p. 285. For details of the Emergency and Total Revolution see, Bipan Chandra, *In the name of Democracy: J.P. and Emergency*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2003.

77. For Details of the Government's viewpoint see "Why Emergency?" Government of India Publication, New Delhi, 1975. J.P.'s version, and experience of his struggle during the Emergency see, *Prison Diary*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1977.

the Jana Sangh and the student wing, Vidyarthi Parishad were in the forefront. The Vidyarthi Parishad particularly, was involved in the movements against the Congress governments of Bihar and Gujrat. The *Organiser* reported that the *Sangh* leadership was considering a civil disobedience and no-tax campaigns against the government.⁷⁸ The J.P. - *Sangh* liason was further fructified by the mutual appreciation when Bala Saheb Deoras, the new *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS called Narayan, a saint, who had come to rescue the society in the dark and critical times⁷⁹ and J.P. on his part publicly appreciated the RSS and denounced the fascist charge on the Jana Sangh.⁸⁰ He also lauded the RSS in its efforts to reduce inequalities and corruption.⁸¹ This praise from a publicly respected personality indeed surged the RSS clout in the national life and its acceptance among the different ideological political groups who joined J.P. in his struggle against the regime.

Thus, the stage was set for a bout between the *Sangh Parivar* who was in on all out support for J.P.'s "Total Revolution" and the Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi. The happenings of early 1975 precipitated the confrontation between the *Sangh* and the government and the already crisis-ridden country was thrown into the quagmire of the political machinations. The opposition with J.P. at the helm of affairs formed *Lok Sangharsh Samiti* (LSS), a body to coordinate the activities of the "Total Revolution" the backbone of whose were the RSS cadres. However, the prime minister was quick to respond with ordering the arrest of the *sarsanghchalak* Bala Saheb Deoras who was detained on June 30. In a subsequent move the RSS and its allies in

78. *Organiser*, September 21, 1974.

79. *Ibid.*, December 7, 1974.

80. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1975.

81. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1975.

the *Lok Sangharsh Samiti* numbering twenty three were proscribed and banned. However, it is interesting to note that the familial affiliates of the RSS escaped from this drastic measure.⁸² So after realising the mental condition of the ruling and other political parties, it became clear that whatever had to be done could be done by only by the RSS workers.⁸³

The response of the RSS initially was cautious and it treaded on wait and watch policy. After the detention of Deoras, Madhav Rao Muley, the RSS general secretary, took the reigns of the RSS and became its acting chief. He announced the dissolution of the RSS as a compact organization even though its skeletal structure remained largely intact.⁸⁴ However, the *shakhas*, training camps, drills, parades, festival celebrations and other similar activities were suspended for that time being. The contact was established with the incarcerated *sarsanghchalak* by some prominent *pracharaks* of the RSS to chalk out future course of action. The four zonal *pracharaks*; Yadav Rao Joshi (south zone), Bhau Rao Deoras (east zone), Rajender Singh (north zone) and Moropant Pingle (west zone) were assigned with the primary responsibility of coordinating the RSS activities.⁸⁵ It was decided that the RSS should work in tandem with the *Lok Sangharsh Samiti* and Eknath Ranade was given the responsibility of liaising with the government.⁸⁶ Thus for the first time the RSS

82. W.K.Andersen and S. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, Vistar, New Delhi, 1987, p.212. RSS struggle against the Emergency is clearly explained by the author that was mainly based upon their interviews with Rajender Singh who was in USA for some time in those days.

83. See P.G.Shasrabuddha and M.C.Vajpayee, *Apat Kaleen Sangharsh Gatha*, 1978 [Translated as *People versus Emergency*, Sudhakar Raje] Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1981, p. 8.

84. Interview with Ram Singh.

85. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

86. *Ibid.*

broke its tradition of an apolitical organization, who for almost fifty years kept itself aloof from the political movements involving direct confrontation with the government.

The July 1975 underground meeting of the senior functionaries of the RSS charted the following goals for this period:

- (a) To maintain the morale of the *swayamsevaks* by providing them opportunities to meet together;
- (b) To establish an underground press and the distribution system for it;
- (c) To prepare for a nationwide *satyagraha* establishing contacts with significant non political figures and with the prominent representatives of the minority communities and;
- (d) To solicit overseas Indian support for the RSS in the underground activities of LSS.⁸⁷

For the last purpose the RSS had established in 1976, The Friends of India Society International, in England. This organization was set up mainly due to the efforts of the overseas *swayamsevaks*.⁸⁸

In struggle against the Emergency, the RSS cadres formed the basis of the LSS whose grass root structure depended upon the RSS network to a large extent. After the arrest of Jai Prakash Narayan, the J.P.Movement was led by the veteran RSS leader Nanaji Deshmukh, who had earlier been selected by Jai Prakash Narayan as the secretary of the LSS. He was given full authority to organize underground resistance. He, however, being a prized catch was soon arrested paving the way for Congress (O)'s Ravinder Verma, as the president of the LSS.⁸⁹ Ravinder Verma's subsequent arrest in

87. *Ibid.*

88. H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p. 295.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

November 1976 brought D.B. Thengadi to the forefront as LSS chief who was the then general secretary of the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (the labour affiliate of the RSS)⁹⁰ So this movement gave the RSS an unprecedented opportunity to gain political experience and work with the leaders and organizations of totally different outlook and ideologies. This activist orientation of the RSS reached to the hilt during the period from 1975 to 1977. With the opposition leaders in jail, the RSS besides CPI (M) was one of the major grassroot organizations with national reach.⁹¹

Anti-Emergency Struggle and the Punjab Experience:

The case of Punjab was no different from the rest of India. The anti-Emergency struggle here was waged by the RSS in close cooperation with the Akali Dal. The Akalis undertook *dharmyudh morcha* to fight the Emergency and in the due course both the Akalis and the *Sangh* people were detained. However, many of them went underground to prevent the arrest and continued to struggle clandestinely. *Lala* Hansraj announced the suspension of RSS work in the Punjab zone and the RSS as an organization was dismantled for that time being.⁹² The Congress government of Punjab was particularly stern on the RSS. The chief minister of Punjab Giani Zail Singh issued a statement defending the ban upon the RSS by saying that they were instigating the youth to promote disorder in the society.⁹³ The *Sangh* offices were raided and locked out.⁹⁴ The finance minister of Punjab while inaugurating the Anti-Fascist

90. *Organiser*, May 28, 1977.

91. Arvind Rajgopal, "*Sangh's* Role in Emergency", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 5, 2003, p. 2798.

92. *Vir Arjun*, New Delhi, July 16, 1975.

93. *Milap*, Jalandhar, August 8, 1975.

94. *Veer Pratap*, Jalandhar, July 28, 1975.

Conference at Jalandhar said that the RSS, Anandmargis and other fascist organizations had made J.P.Narayan their leader to seize power.⁹⁵

The prime minister Indira Gandhi was particularly wary of the RSS's activities and in her speeches in different parts of the country during the Emergency, she seldom missed the opportunity of chastising the RSS and its alleged fascist character. In one of her speeches at the plenary session of the Congress at Chandigarh in December 1975, Indira Gandhi reiterated her stance and said if Jana Sangh comes to power, it will not need emergency. It will chop off heads. Heads were chopped off in Bangladesh and Chile. Persons there were not just detained. They were murdered."⁹⁶ There was censor on the news items published in the dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies. Even the news that was coming out regarding the Emergency strictly carried out the government's version "*RSS Par Pratibandh Kyon?*" [Why ban on the RSS?], was published in one of the Punjabi's leading daily which elucidated the reasons justifying the ban. Among other reasons cited for the ban one was the seizure of weapons from various the RSS offices through out the country. In Punjab, the newspaper mentioned following items seized from the various RSS offices in Punjab which included, twenty swords, twenty-five tin swords, *guptis* (small spears) eighty-six *lathis*, twenty-six sticks, eight protective sheilds of leather and two wooden sheilds.⁹⁷ The government's crackdown was severe and therefore, many RSS leaders including the top *pracharaks* of Punjab tried to evade the arrest by undergrounding themselves or simply kept low

95. The Tribune, Chandigarh, November 9, 1975.

96. Cited in A. Moin Zaidi (ed.), *The Annual Register of Indian Political Parties: 1974-76*, S.Chand, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 418, 419.

97. Milap, Jalandhar, September 23, 1975.

profile. Those who dared to take on the authorities were arrested, tortured, though some were released by tendering unqualified apologies. But still, for a short period the LSS gave sleepless nights to the authorities by the virtue of its well knit under ground network.⁹⁸

The *modus operandi* of the RSS in Punjab during the Emergency was on similar lines as elsewhere in India where it was waging a similar struggle. The houses of the *Sangh* workers proved to be one among the greatest of assets for networking the underground movement. And it was to this factor that government's intelligence agencies owed their defeat *i.e.* tracing the whereabouts of the underground workers or their meeting places. These houses provided shelter not only to the *Sangh* workers but also to others in the LSS.⁹⁹ The prominent RSS workers of Punjab were assigned the political duty of organizing the BJS. They organised *sampark abhiyans* (contact campaigns) *i.e.* liaisoning with other leaders and people who were equally aggrieved by the Emergency. These contact campaigns among other things did one worth-while service to Punjab's polity and society by bringing the Akali Sikhs and Hindu nationalists closer to each other.¹⁰⁰

The RSS was in the center stage of the government's ire, therefore, inspite of meeting in the *shakhas* on which the intelligence had hawk's eye, the *swayamsevaks* started gathering in the guise of clubs and societies *viz.* football club, yoga club, drama society, *bhajan mandlis, etc.* By this way they reinitiated networking. The clandestine meetings were arranged at secluded places like brick kilns, burial grounds, ruins of the old buildings and similar other places. The plans

98. Interview with D.P.Gupta, at Moga on September 2, 2007.

99. H.V.Sheshadri op. cit., p. 288.

100. Interview with D.P.Gupta.

were made for the forth coming *satyagrahas* and the information was disseminated by two important modes. Firstly, by the post and secondly, secretly by hand. An all India weekly news bulletin was started in English and Hindi called *Lok Sangharsh* and *Jana Vani* in mid 1975 from Delhi.¹⁰¹ Another newspaper called *Delhi News Bulletin* was started few months after the Emergency which was despatched to all the state capitals and further to the districts of those states.¹⁰² Some local bulletins were also started by the LSS by cyclostyling because of the lack of sources for sophisticated machines. Interestingly, the cyclostyling was done mostly at night and if in case it was done in the day then radio was blown in full volume so as to suppress the sound of the cyclostyle machine. The *swayamsevaks* changed their names, their appearances and dresses to camouflage their identity. As the C.I.D. was always on prowl, so the scooters paved the way for cycles in order to evade detection by the scooter's number. Even the *swayamsevaks* (of course those who were the prominent ones and were in the eyes of the government) changed their residing places and shifted themselves to those localities where they were hitherto unknown. They even changed these residing places quite often to prevent themselves from being traced and tracked down.¹⁰³

When the Emergency was declared, an OTC was going on at Rohtak (Haryana), where the *swayamsevaks* from different parts of the northern region were participating. As soon as the Emergency was

101. Arvind Rajgopal, op. cit., pp. 2798, 2799.

102. *Organiser*, May 28, 1975.

103. Interview with Rameshwar (current *prant pracharak* of Punjab and during the Emergency he was the *pracharak* at Chandigarh. He spent fifty days in the Burail Jail at Chandigarh) at Amritsar on January 5, 2008.

clamped, the district authorities asked the RSS to dismantle that camp, but the order was flouted. On June 26, when the police came to stop that camp they were resisted by the RSS workers. However, the discerning ground realities forced Om Parkash Mengi, incharge of that camp, to comply with the orders. The camp was dispersed and the *swayamsevaks* were asked to proceed towards their respective states (At that camp *swayamsevaks* from the five northern states were participating as it was the zonal camp of the north zone). After the dispersal, the *swayamsevaks* from Punjab who were participating in the camp, on their arrival at Chandigarh initiated *satyagraha* by integrating with the other members of the LSS at Sector 17 ground. Some eight *swayamsevaks* of the RSS alongwith Ratiram Goyal and Rameshwar courted arrest and were lodged in the Buraill Jail.¹⁰⁴

One of the daring acts of the LSS in the region was their attempt to sabotage the plenary session of AICC at Chandigarh where D.K.Barooha and Indira Gandhi were scheduled to participate. In spite of wide scale arrests, the *swayamsevaks* who were the part of the LSS managed to show black flags to the Congress (I) president, D.K.Barooha and shouted slogans against the regime. They even managed to sneak in the procession, stopped the cavalcade, distributed anti Emergency pamphlets among the people. These people, though, were protesting non-violently but were butted out of the way of the cavalcade which remained still on the road for almost ten minutes. The protestors were bundled up by the police in trucks and were lodged to the jails.¹⁰⁵

The meticulous planning of the LSS and the ultra secret underground network of the RSS again showed its strength while the

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

plenary session was going on. Three batches of the LSS secretly managed to sneak in the ongoing Congress session with the idea of raising slogans in between the speech of Indira Gandhi and thus to disrupt the whole proceeding. These batches started raising slogans as Indira Gandhi started with her address. One after one *i.e.* the first batch raised slogans, disrupted the speech and was chucked out. The proceedings went smoothly for sometime till the next batch stood up and repeated the exercise and then the third one. Though they were severely reprimanded later on but were successful in their endeavour. It was to this instance that Indira Gandhi took highly critical stance *vis-à-vis* RSS in her speech. The prominent *swayamsevaks* in these batches included Rakesh (who later on became the *pracharak* of J and K) and Om Prakash Bhardwaj of Pathankot. Similarly, one *satyagraha* was performed at the Punjab University campus by Rameshwar and Sat Pal Jain (ex - BJP M.P. from Chandigarh) who courted their arrest.¹⁰⁶

Here, I will give few other examples depicting the role of *swayamsevaks* in the JP Movement in Punjab. One D.P. Gupta, who was the general secretary of the Punjab unit of Janta Party during the Emergency, was given the work of coordination. During the course of events he spent three months in the jail.¹⁰⁷ As he was the RSS functionary and was lent to the politics for the sake of providing mettle to the LSS So after revocation of the Emergency he returned back to the RSS and resumed the work of the *sanghathan*. Likewise, the *pracharak* of Abohar-Fazilka Vijay Gupta performed *satyagraha* at his place. He was one of those few who spent longest duration in the

106. Interview with Rakesh at Jammu and also *Ibid*.

107. Interview with D.P.Gupta.

jail and his stay was of one year, one month and seventeen days.¹⁰⁸ Vinod Dhamija, a *swayamsevak* from Moga started *satyagraha* there along with Om Prakash Goyal (former president of Punjab Karyana Association), local *pracharak* Mohan Lal, Karam Singh Dhunna (gold smith) Lekhraj Dhawan, the tehsil *sanghchalak* also participated in that anti-Emergency struggle. However, they spent variable time spans in the jail. In Punjab, the area of Moga and around, was pioneer in the anti-Emergency struggle and so the LSS was strong in this area *vis-à-vis* other parts of Punjab.¹⁰⁹

In the nineteen months period during the Emergency approximately two thousand members of the LSS went to the prison for variable time periods which ranged from few hours to the several months.¹¹⁰ The government clampdown here was on the expected lines *i.e.* those who retreated, tendered apologies in writing were set free conditionally while the others who did not back off were given all sorts of torture sometimes mild and many times inhuman. Still there were many RSS *swayamsevaks* who went underground because they knew the importance of their organization and its cadres for giving sustenance to the LSS struggle. As earlier said, the *swayamsevaks* in Punjab worked in close cooperation with the Akalis the communists and the socialists, thus they gained vital political experience which also helped in improving the quantum of their acceptability among the divergent socio-political groups.¹¹¹

However, during the Emergency regime even though the

108. Interview with Vijay Gupta, at Moga, on September 2, 2007.

109. *Ibid.*

110. "Shah Commission of Inquiry - Third and Final Report", August 6, 1978, New Delhi, Government of India Press, 1978. It gave the figure of total number of individuals arrested at 16, of the banned organizations and 33 from the political parties.

111. Interview with Rameshwar.

Sangh put up a brave front against the government authorities in Punjab and there was an instance of brutal torture of the provincial secretary who was booted, was kept standing in the sun for the whole day and was kept awoken for four full nights. The rats were shoved into his pyjamas whose ends were tied alongwith many other kinds of atrocities but he refused to sign a self-incriminating statement.¹¹² But along with it there were also the incidents where the *swayamsevaks* backed off from the agitation and tendered unconditional apologies and even deserted the movement in the wake of government's reprisal. In Ludhiana, for example, seventy two RSS workers were released which were detained under the Emergency after tendering a written undertaking to the authorities that in future they would not indulge in any kind of political and objectionable activity.¹¹³ Similarly, in Chandigarh, twelve RSS and Jana Sangh workers were released who were detained under the Emergency after tendering unqualified apology.¹¹⁴

Still inspite of these instances the work of the RSS in Punjab along with other opposition parties was commendable. Nearly hundred *swayamsevaks* were killed during the Emergency all over India. In Punjab the figure was two and those who were arrested were around two thousand which was quite less as compared to the figures of the other parts of India.¹¹⁵ (Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were top in the list of the persons detained and died during the Emergency,)

The twenty-one months ban imposed upon the RSS on

112. H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p. 293.

113. *Pioneer*, Lucknow, July 15, 1975.

114. *Indian Express*, August 7, 1975.

115. Interview with Rameshwar. He was doubtful regarding the exact figures.

July 4, 1975, was revoked on March 21, 1977, only after the victory of the Janta Party in the general elections of March, 1977. But according to the RSS leader M.V. Moghe who claimed that they were being approached by the prime minister through a high government intelligence official prior to the polling for political bargaining. The offer was that the government would lift the ban if the RSS would withdraw its ranks from the Janta alliance.¹¹⁶ But the talks could not be materialized as the government failed to fulfill the conditions laid down by the RSS such as full release of all the *Sangh* prisoners and return of the property attached.¹¹⁷ The RSS version here was that they could not stab the nation in the back just to save their skin and therefore would not tolerate any move which would turn all their sufferings sacrifices into waste.¹¹⁸ But the RSS critics in the Janta alliance accused them of backtracking by protecting themselves than assisting the underground effort. They cited Deoras and Indira Gandhi's parleys to buttress their viewpoint.¹¹⁹

However, the accusations and the clarifications¹²⁰ cannot

116. *Organiser*, August 8, 1977, and also H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p.298.

117. *Organiser*, *Ibid*.

118. H.V.Sheshadri, op. cit., p. 298.

119. The most outspoken critic was Madhu Limyae who pointed out that RSS's main objective was to secure the removal of the ban and for this Deoras even congratulated Indira Gandhi on her victory in an election appeal before the Supreme court and readiness of Deoras in deserting J.P.'s movement. See Madhu Limaye, *Janta Party Experience: An Insider's Account of Opposition Politics 1975-1977*, B.R.Publishing Corporation Delhi, 1994, p.134. Similarly D.R.Goyal, an erstwhile *swyamsevak* also mentioned the letters written by Deoras to Gandhi securing the removal of the ban. See his, *The Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh*, Radha Krishan Prakashan, Delhi, 1979, Appendix VI.

120. Deoras argued that the letters written to Indira Gandhi were to open a dialogue with the government. See *Organiser*, March 25, 1979. Similarly, Dina Nath Mishra, *RSS: Myth and Reality*, Vikas Publishing House, Ghaziabad, 1980, p.50, claims that those letters were written to answer the government's criticism of the *Sangh*.

deny the basic proposition that the RSS played a sheet anchor role in sustaining the anti-Emergency struggle. Its cadre provided mobility to the LSS, which spearheaded the JP Movement. They worked in close coordination the opposition parties like the Samyukta Socialist party, Bhartiya Lok Dal, Akalis, Congress (Organization), CPI(M), Naxalites, Jamatis and many other groups. In this *stayagraha*, the RSS claimed that its one lakh *swayamsevaks* participated of which ABVP contributed twelve thousand and BMS contributed ten thousand volunteers.¹²¹ The RSS claimed that out of thirty thousand people arrested under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act), the *Sangh* had the credit of contributing twenty five thousand and an equal number under the Defence of India rules.¹²² It was also said that inspite of the pressure from many *swayamsevaks* for resorting to the violent methods to convince the government, no national leader of the *Sangh* supported the argument and the *satyagraha* demonstrated *Sangh's* commitment to the non-violence.¹²³

The RSS emerged stronger and its base consolidated after the Emergency. The importance of the Emergency in the growth of the RSS needs to be emphasized because it helps to periodise *Hindutva's* active involvement in the national politics.¹²⁴ After independence, with the taint of Gandhi's assassination, the RSS was truly a political pariah. But after the Emergency the capacity to acquire political power came within its reach. The Congress mode of governance as the dominant political system from here onwards appeared increasingly vulnerable to the forces which were hitherto at the periphery. The Janta Party experience at the centre was case in a

121. *Organiser*, May 28, 1977.

122. H.V. Sheshdri, *op. cit.*, p. 292 and D.N.Mishra, *op.cit.* p. 46.

123. D.N.Mishra, *Ibid.*

124. Arvind Raj Gopal *op. cit.*, p. 2798.

point, even though the *Sangh* had already tasted power in Punjab almost a decade ago. So the fortunes of secularism and *Hindutva* were decisively changed thereafter.¹²⁵

Post Emergency Experience and Punjab's Changing Circumstances:

The successful battle waged by the *Sangh* along with the other opposition forces bolstered their self-confidence which made them more determined and ambitious. Now they were thinking on the lines of activism *i.e.* more activist approach towards social and political concerns afflicting the state. In the first elections after the Emergency, the RSS cadres campaigned vigorously for the Janta Party candidates of which the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal were the main constituents. The results of elections were nightmarish for the Congress and the Janta alliance swept major chunk of the parliamentary seats in Punjab. The similar thing happened in the state assembly elections also. However, the fragile coalition of the Janta Party at the centre was constantly indulged in the bickerings on different issues of which the RSS issue occupied the centre stage. This was the 'dual membership controversy' (*i.e.* the joint membership of the Jana Sangh and the RSS), which started raging and this with the passage of time assumed dangerous proportions for the coalition.

But in Punjab the Jana Sangh - Akali coalition was much stronger than the coalitions at the central level. This might be attributed to three reasons, first, their common political foe, the Congress, of whose high handedness both were the equal victims; second, their earlier electoral and power sharing experience in the last decade which had made them mutually accommodating and; third, a bit of mutual mistrust of each other because inspite of common

125. *Ibid.*

Punjabi heritage both were largely considered as the representatives of their communities and both were suspicious of each others hegemonising agenda *i.e.* the Akali's *panthic* agenda (*raj karega khalsa*) and Jana Sangh's (of whose backbone was the RSS) *Hindu Rashtra* of which Sikhs were the inalienable part. These calculations always kept both on the tenterhook lest their common opponent, Congress, strikes back, along with their own internal weaknesses. But still at many occasions the Hindu agenda of the RSS and their repeated rhetoric antagonized the Sikhs. This was happening in those times and it is happening now, too.

Outside the political ground, the RSS was expanding its network and thus experienced a surge in its membership along with those of its affiliates. The number of *shakhas* in the country increased from 8500 in 1975 to 10,000 in 1977.¹²⁶ In the next year *i.e.* 1978, the number of *shakhas* increased to 13,000.¹²⁷ In the next couple of years the surge was more rapid with its expansion in the hitherto unexplored areas and because of favourable political climate. In the year 1981 the shakha count in the country touched the figure of 17,000 with the opening of 3,000 new *shakhas* as compared to the previous year.¹²⁸ This was true to Punjab also because now the RSS was concentrating more on the Sikh dominated area of Punjab. So, it was vigorously endeavouring in making itself more inclusive and acceptable to the Sikhs.¹²⁹

For the first time after the termination of the Emergency, the RSS *sarsanghchalak*, Bala Saheb Deoras visited Punjab in the month of April. The aim of that visit was to restructure the RSS

126. *Organiser*, March 5, 1978.

127. *Organiser*, March 29, 1979.

128. *Organiser*, April 5, 1981.

129. Interview with D.P.Gupta.

network in Punjab, which had been disturbed and weakened during the twenty-one months ban and ensuing government suppression. There was another motive of the visit and that was to enhance the akinness between the Akalis and the Jana Sangh which were heading for the coalition during the upcoming elections. The Akalis, as always, were wary of increasing RSS's interference in the political affairs, as also on the Hindu-Sikh question. So this exercise on the part of the RSS was meant for clearing the air and to create mutual cordiality. Bala Saheb was received at the railway station of Amritsar on April 15, 1977 by Bhagat Puran Singh, of Pingalwara, Amritsar.¹³⁰ (photograph is given in Appendix 2). He addressed a massive gathering at the Golbagh, Amritsar where the provincial RSS functionaries *viz. prant pracharak* Mitrasen, *karyavaha* Narain Dass, Lajpat Rai, Babu Dilip Chand Gupta, Jitendraveer Gupta, veteran journalist Lala Jagat Narain (*Hindi Samachar Group*), Madhav Rao Muley, Thatte, Bapu Rao Moghe and the Akali *Jathedar* Mohan Singh Toor accompanied him in the rally (photograph in Appendix 2). The important feature of his speech was his appreciation of the *swayamsevaks* for their role in the anti Emergency struggle and creating an atmosphere for the Hindu-Sikh amity. On the next day he was honoured by the members of the S.G.P.C. who presented him Siropa (photograph in Appendix 2).¹³¹ Such moves on the part of the RSS were aimed at achieving the social respectability for itself and the political respectability for the Jana Sangh by showing that the Hindu nationalists were reliable partners. Moreover, by this time the RSS was considering the opening up of its membership to the non-Hindus probably due to the Emergency

130. Pingalwara at Amritsar is an institution for leprosy and other diseased people started by Bhagat Puran Singh, a renowned philanthropist.

131. The account is based upon the photographs of the events. These photographs are available at RSS Punjab Head Office at Amritsar.

experience and the appreciation that was earned from respected national figure, Jai Prakash Narayan.¹³²

In the renewed exercise to expand its base in Punjab making more and more Hindus its members or atleast sympathetic to its ideology and the Sikhs more comfortable *vis-à-vis* RSS presence, it organized provincial camp at Patiala from November 3 to November 5, 1977. The camp was set up in the shape of little township named as, *Madhav Puri*. In this camp three thousand *swayamsevaks* from the Punjab *prant*¹³³ participated, which included Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.¹³⁴ In *Madhav Puri*, five small temporary residential towns were set up out of which in four, for the three days camp, accommodation for the *swayamsevaks* coming from other states was made. The names of the townships presented an interesting mix of the Hindu and Sikh, culture and religion. The names were *Maharishi Dayanand Nagar*, *Satguru Ram Singh Nagar*, *Guru Ram Dass Nagar* and *General Zorawar Singh Nagar*. The fifth town was the central town whose name was kept on the name of *Bhagwan Mahavir*. The whole camp was spread in an area, two kilometres long and one kilometre wide and contained four hundred forty tents.¹³⁵

The camp presented a miniature of the RSS mode of life disciplined on the *Hindutva* ground. The strict discipline and routine was observed from morning to evening till sleeping which included, morning wake up call, *prathana* (prayer), *dhawaja rohan*, (unfurling of

132. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op.cit. p. 222.

133. Here Punjab *prant* means from the RSS viewpoint entire north India above Delhi, which is the functional unit of the RSS.

134. Navchetana Pushpmala-3, Madhav Puri, Prantiya Shivir Punjab, Akashvani Prakashan, Jalandhar, 1978, p. 1.

135. *Ibid.*, p.4

the flag), salutations, drill, meals, *boudhiks* (discourses) and so on. All the prominent RSS ideologues made themselves available in the camp for the series of lectures dealing with various facets of the Hindu life. The prominent leaders of the *Sangh* included the *sarsanghchalak* Bala Saheb Deoras, the *sarkaryavaha* Rajju Bhaiya (or Rajender Singh), Ram Singh, Rajasthan *prant pracharak* Sohan Singh, *etc.*¹³⁶ However, the most discernible and conspicuous presence was of *Sant* Harchand Singh Longowal, who delivered the presidential address and lauded discipline and physical prowess of the *swyamsevaks*. He appreciated the views of Deoras *vis-à-vis* Punjab and the Hindu-Sikh relations and the services rendered by the RSS during the Akali *Morcha* at Amritsar during the Emergency. He said that the RSS's countrywide network was instrumental in the dispersal of the news of Punjab's struggle to the corners of the country. He ultimately thanked the RSS, for providing him with the opportunity of presiding over the gathering and inviting him to the camps thus making it possible for him to know the RSS, closely and clearly.¹³⁷ This camp was the first massive exercise by the RSS in Punjab during that decade. Simultaneously, along the show of strength it also earned the goodwill of the milder Sikhs by inviting the respected Sikh figure of the stature of *Sant* Longowal to its camp.

The RSS's further efforts to strengthen itself in Punjab and to remove the misgivings of the minorities included its invitation to *Shahi Imam*, Abdulha Bukhari in February 1978.¹³⁸ He visited the RSS *shakha* at Fazilka. He, while addressing the gathering of the

136. *Ibid.*, pp.7,8.

137. *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.

138. *Organiser*, March 19, 1978.

swayamsevaks on the eve of Guru Ravidass birthday on February 23, 1978, said that his mission was same as that of the RSS, *i.e.* to fight tyranny in any shape or form. He further added that the Emergency had cemented the Hindu- Muslim-Sikh ties. At the conclusion of the ceremony he paid tribute to the Saffron flag (*Bhagwa Dhwaja*) of the RSS and also joined them in their prayer.¹³⁹ This event was of two fold importance. First, it was the first ever visit of a respected Muslim clergy of the stature of the Shahi Imam to the RSS *shakha*, secondly, and more importantly, now the RSS had started shedding its exclusivist moorings thereby opening its doors for the non-Hindus. The Emergency experience was an important facilitator and the catalyst for this change.¹⁴⁰

This change in the attitude of the RSS *vis-à-vis* Muslim might also be attributed to their position concerning the status of Aligarh Muslim University. The reforms that happened in this university in 1965 and 1972 resulted in a considerable diminution of its autonomy. In the election campaign however, some of the Jana Sangh's erstwhile members had promised to restore its privileges. Even a bill to this effect had been prepared.¹⁴¹ That was why Jama Masjid's Imam spoke out in favour of lifting the ban on the RSS and also was its ally in Gandhi's Emergency.¹⁴² The whole development led to increased efforts of the Hindu nationalists for fraternization with the Muslims. This new found harmony culminated to the reality when the RSS *sarsanghchalak* Deoras visited Delhi and the activists of the RSS and the Jamat-e-Islami demonstrated a high degree of fraternity

139. *Ibid.*

140. Andersen and S. Damle, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

141. V.Graff, "Aligarh's Long Quest for Minority Status", *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 11, 1990, p. 173.

142. *Indian Express*, March 2, 1975.

among them.¹⁴³ These developments percolated down towards Punjab resulting in the high profile visit of the Imam to the *Sangh shakha*.

Although, the post Emergency period till the foundation of the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) was the era of rapid RSS expansion and growth. But this was also the time of grave political dilemma. The RSS cadres who campaigned vigorously for the Janta alliance candidates and ensured the defeat of Indira Gandhi now became an issue of the controversy called dual membership as mentioned earlier. The Janta alliance partners objected to the dual membership of the Jana Sangh members with the RSS. However, the Jana Sangh group dismissed the argument and said that the RSS was not a political party.¹⁴⁴ This fragile claim of the Hindu nationalists that they were carrying forward the heritage of the fathers of the nation and of the constitution was exploited by the Congress (I).¹⁴⁵ The centrifugal tendencies in the Janta alliance regarding the RSS question ultimately led to its collapse and its final take over by the Congress (I), who used these bickering for its own political sake.

The dark clouds of the political instability at the centre also casted their shadow on Punjab where the Akalis and the Jana Sanghis were the main constituents of the alliance. The bickerings among the alliance partners started here when the Congress (O) leaders of Punjab in their meeting at Chandigarh passed a resolution in which it was said that the Janta party in Punjab had gone into the hands of the semi-military RSS.¹⁴⁶ They further alleged that the funds for the Janta government had been diverted towards funding the RSS

143. Hindustan Times, April 10, 1977.

144. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op. cit., p. 216

145. Christophe Jafferlot, op. cit., p. 305.

146. Patriot, New Delhi, July 17, 1977.

activities. They also warned that the RSS might elbow out non-RSS members of the Janta Party.¹⁴⁷ The increasing influence of the RSS was discernible and the apprehensions of the RSS's opponents proved right when under the patronage of the Jana Sangh, ten days training camps were held at Batala, Bathinda, Ludhiana and Kurali in which twenty five thousand *swayamsevaks* participated.¹⁴⁸

Likewise, the long-term friends of the Hindu nationalists in Punjab *i.e.* Akalis too were growing wary of increasing RSS influence in the political and the social sphere. This was also true to some extent, as the student wing of the RSS *i.e.* ABVP was increasingly adopting the activist and radical stance in the student politics.¹⁴⁹ The Akali faction of the Punjab Janta Party government alleged that the RSS was designing to capture the Panjab University.¹⁵⁰ The Communists of Punjab too echoed the similar sentiments. The pressure was continuously building upon the Jana Sanghis to give up their allegiance to the RSS. However, in an exercise to clear the air, the zonal *pracharak* of the RSS Bhrmdev stated that the RSS was not a captive of the Jana Sangh (because by now some Jana Sanghis also started feeling the RSS stranglehold) and people should not confuse that the government of the Janta Party was a government of the RSS.¹⁵¹ This statement and probably of the similar types at the centre and in other states of the country, were issued to allay the doubts crippling the minds of the people, in general and the politicians in particular, regarding the RSS's motives. On the other

147. *Ibid.*

148. *Ibid.*

149. As stated earlier in this chapter that during the Emergency ABVP activists performed *satyagraha* and courted arrest in the Panjab University Campus.

150. Patriot, New Delhi, July 17, 1977.

151. Vir Pratap, Jalandhar, July 19, 1977.

hand the ground level situation in the RSS broadly remained unaffected by the circumstances of the upper echelons. The training of the *swayamsevaks* and the expansion of the activities progressed unabated. This was proved when the Instructors Training Camp (ITC) was organised at Sai Dass school in Jalandhar where about eighty six *swayamsevaks* of age group 14 to 25 years participated.¹⁵²

The fear of RSS take over of the Jana Sangh and ultimately the government, among its rivals was however unlikely. The situation in the late 1970s though favourable to the growth of the RSS were not similar to that of early 1950s when the death of Mookerjee created a political vacuum in the Jana Sangh which ultimately was filled by the RSS young turks (Balraj Madhok, D.D.Upadhyaya, A.B.Vajpayee). However, the RSS element in the Janta government now was considerably smaller. Also, the leadership with their apolitical leanings probably would not sanction any such move which might earn the ire of powerful political forces who might well gang up to impose crippling restrictions on its activities. So the consistent feature of the RSS behaviour during these years, even since its inception and till today, was to avoid, whenever possible, those actions which invite political retribution.¹⁵³ The situation in Punjab also warranted the similar tactics on the part of the Hindu nationalists, more so because of the peculiar nature of Punjab politics with the Sikh leadership in dominant position.

The RSS and the Punjab Terrorism:

The Punjab problem was essentially of socio-cultural nature. Though, it was mainly manifested on the political plane. The situation of turmoil, communal disharmony and violence during the

152. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1977.

153. W.K.Andersen and S.Damle, op. cit., p. 221.

terrorism was neither the sudden outburst nor an isolated phenomenon. But it was rather a culmination of a phase of the alienation process accentuated by various factors like socio-psychological, political, geopolitical, economic and religious ones. These factors in turn acted upon one another and also perpetuated each other. Identification and role of such factors will be helpful in analyzing the background and foreseeing the hitherto unforeseen consequences with emphasis on the RSS's world view on this problem.

From the very beginning, the angle of vision of RSS had been different from that of politicians or the political parties, because while the politicians look at any problem from the point of view of votes and elections. For a cultural organization like the RSS, the unity of the Hindu society was most important which is the compound fabric of multiple threads of the different panths and sects. In Punjab RSS has never considered the *keshdhari* and non *keshdhari* brethren as different. They have blood relations, relation of 'roti and beti', relation of common faiths and customs and have common ethos.¹⁵⁴ Regarding the question of separate identity; RSS has viewed diversity as the peculiarity of the Hindu society. The small things had been deformed out of proportion into the big problems, during that time but the RSS believed that not by mere talks, but by sincere thoughts and practical efforts it was determined to blow away the dust of misunderstandings defacing the glorious traditions of Punjab.¹⁵⁵

The RSS viewed that the process of the solidification of the Sikh identity started mainly in the first decade of 20th century. The process of identity solidification from the rural community to the

154 RSS *vis-a-vis* Punjab Problem, Suruchi Parkashan, New Delhi 1984, p. 3.

155 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

religious community to the semisolid state of separate community and then to the colloidal situation of separate nationality was seen accelerating faster in the post independence era and that too from 1960 onwards *i.e.* since emphasis upon Punjabi as state language, and formation of Punjab state.¹⁵⁶ The factors which had contributed in creating a wedge between the Sikh and the non Sikh population in Punjab had basically their roots in the psychological complexes between the people residing in the *qasba* towns and tilling folks and farmers in the villages. This could be termed as rural-urban states complex, sociologically speaking. The farmer slowly developed a sort of feeling of ill will towards the people residing in the town, which was a mixture of envy, competition anger and frustration. The complexes were reflected in mutual relationships and interaction. A tussle of exhibiting superiority set in leading to rivalry, groupism, leg pulling, arm-twisting, and strong arm tactics, *etc.* Cunningness became the tool urbanite and muscle superiority in the case of ruralite.¹⁵⁷

Specially, after the independence, as the economic progress was strived for, tension arose in the relationships. The Green Revolution contributed substantially to the economic progress of the farmers. The new found wealth made the rural folk, the Sikhs, to go for self assertion. Gurdwaras also received more funds. So showing off status and strength by the Sikh community on the religious plane become an added dimension of the rural-urban complex of relationships in the sixties. But still the intermarriage custom and bringing up of elder son as a Sikh was then prevalent in Punjab. The interspersed land holdings in rural as well as urban areas

156 A Note on Punjab Problem, RSS Head office, Keshav Kunj, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, 1984, p. 2.

157 *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3.

too were discernible. So still there were strong bonds of harmony and the good will.¹⁵⁸

In the course of time, the gurdwara politics gained strength and with those inner party rivalries also sprung up. This resulted in the emergence of Jat leadership in the Akali Dal, which consisted of all ideological shades right from religious fanatics to the Marxist synthesis. The era of sixties witnessed communal division growing bigger. On the issue of language *i.e.* Punjabi versus Hindi and Punjabi *Suba* versus *Maha* Punjab, the tension exacerbated. Arya Samaj which had some following and standing among the non-Sikhs helped in increasing the gulf. The rural-urban psyche started playing its role. So, separateness of Sikhism from the Hindu fold grew into the minds of the Sikhs even more prominently. The ruling party too played the game of treachery, division and temptation. Because of this communal division of the minds of the people, the game of communalization of the power politics, rural-urban complex psyche resulted into ego satisfaction exercises like assertion of not only separateness but superiority of the Sikh religion. This created a mass psychology that the Sikhs, a superior race and inspite of great achievements to their credit were still being persecuted.¹⁵⁹

The newly earned economic affluence made the Sikh youth disinclined from the religious devotion. So, the Sikh clergy started efforts to draw them nearer by adopting fundamentalist stance. Since the Akali politics also revolved around the gurdwaras, it too resorted to the echoing of fundamentalist slogans. The Aryas and the Sanatanists by their actions which were born out of the fundamentalist approach of the Sikh *panthic* leaders helped in polarizing the whole

158 *Ibid.*, p.4.

159 *Ibid.*, p.5.

process. In this background of widening gulf and conflicting competitive interests came Anandpur Sahib Resolution, a queer combination of religious fundamentalism and the theory of the right of self-determination. However, from 1973 to 1980 the polarization stemmed a bit because of the national political situation. However, it should be remembered that the struggle against the Emergency was termed by the Akalis as *dharamyudh* or the religious war.¹⁶⁰

The era of 1980 onwards witnessed the worsening of the situation because of the disorganized, *ad-hoc* and bitterly communal approach to the political questions. The conflicting perceptions about, whether Bhindranwala was a saint or a communal gangster with his cult of violence, Satwant Singh an assassin or a martyr, the Sikh community a persecuted or a pampered one, the actions of the terrorists were the criminal acts of violence or the part of liberation struggle, the problem was of law and order or of political nature, *etc.* indicated the extent of the mess that had been made of the Punjab situation.

The emergence of Shivsena phenomenon among the non-Sikh, Hindus and similar other Hindu organizations, though were in a reaction to the continuous onslaught of the terrorists, of which Hindus considered themselves alone on the receiving end. This resultantly gave a trace of immoral legitimacy of justification to the furtherance of the extremist violence. These developments widened the psychological gulf between the two communities further and thus resulted into the lowering of the credibility of the well-meaning forces existing in the non-Sikh community in the eyes of already apprehensive Sikhs. More so, these forces were depleted in their

160 *Ibid.*, p.5, 6.

strength since independence. The communal power politics had weakened the hold of communist parties in Punjab on one hand and the Hindu nationalists like RSS on the other.

Withstanding with its perceptions regarding the Sikh separatism and inspite of various handicaps it faced in Punjab, the *Sangh Parivar* played constructive role in diffusing off the tension to some extent, at least from the minds of the Hindus. In the resolution passed by the *Akhil Bhartiya Karyakari Mandal* (ABKM) of the RSS at Agra on July 10–11, 1982, it strongly condemned all such pernicious attempts at engineering strife and conflicts in the national society of the country. It deplored the acts of throwing of cigarette butt ends and severed heads of cows into gurdwaras and temples with the view to desecrating them and inflaming passions among the communities. It also accused the certain political leaders for their indirect support to *Khalistan* extremists who wanted to achieve their political ends.¹⁶¹

This resolution further said that all the faiths of the Hindu society *viz.* the Sikh, the Sanatani, the Arya Samaji, the Jains *etc.* were but the diverse paths to reach the same goal. And when the ideals of the Hindu *dharma* were endangered, it was *Guru Teg Bahadur* and *Guru Gobind Singh* who made supreme sacrifices. Therefore no person with genuine faith in those *gurus* would ever dream of chaining them within the bounds of a province, language or faith and thus slashing down their stature. The ABKM expressed its satisfaction at the courageous restraint displayed by the common people of Punjab even in the face of grave provocations. It also called upon the enlightened countrymen to denounce such extremist acts and elements and urged the government both state and the centre to act

161 *Akhil Bhartiya Karyakari Mandal, Resolution No. 4, RSS Documents at Jhandewalan, New Delhi 1982.*

with swiftness and firmness.¹⁶²

Again, in the very next year, the ABKM of the RSS in its meeting at Pune on July 9-10, 1983, passed the resolution number 3 pertaining to the Punjab situation. In the resolution, while expressing their intense concern about the worsening Punjab situation, they accused those political leaders and the parties, who have their own axe to grind and certain other elements, which were playing into the hands of the foreign powers. They have created bad blood among the kith and kin. The resolution further said that all the injustices or discriminations should have to be removed through peaceful and constitutional means. The resolution made the reference of Guru Gobind Singh's clarion call of: "May *Hindu dharma* rise and the evil forces flee," underlying the fact that Hindus and Sikhs have common lineage, surnames and have been inter marrying and inter dining since Sikhism's inception.¹⁶³

In the same resolution, the RSS severely condemned the inhuman atrocities of the extremists. It accused the Punjab government of pitiable failure and urged the central government to stop all that with an iron hand. They congratulated the Punjabi brethren for their remarkable restraint and prudence that they refused to walk into the trap. They called upon the entire Hindu people including the Sikhs to put up a united front as an impregnable bulwark against the present danger. The RSS in this resolution also urged its *swayamsevaks* to stand shoulder to shoulder with their countrymen and should undertake brisk house to house campaign and through their fearless, honest and amicable behaviour should try to dispel the

162 *Ibid.*

163 Akhil Bhartiya Karyakari Mandal, Resolution No. 3, RSS Documents at Jhandewalan, New Delhi, 1983.

atmosphere of confusion, scare and bitterness.¹⁶⁴

During this pathetic and tumultuous situation of the Punjab, the RSS *sarsanghchalak*, Bala Saheb Deoras, toured the province in December 1983. In his series of lectures during the tour he expressed his views concerning the situation and the possible remedial measures. The first thing that he reiterated during his address to the people at Jalandhar was that the Sikh community is the part and parcel of the Hindu society. He said, "Guru Granth Sahib is a sacred book of the Sikhs. The name RAMA has been mentioned thousands of times in it, the name CHANDI also occurs hundreds of times. So many sayings of Maharashtrian saint Nam Dev also occur in it." He said, "The sacrifices made by the Sikh gurus and reasons thereof what they said at the time of laying down their lives. The dialogue between Guru Teg Bahadur and Aurangzeb, the reason given by the *Guru* for his self sacrifice *etc.* can be seen in the historical documents. Guru Gobind Singh Ji has written a book RAM AVTAR. He has written the hymns in praise of Chandi. All that literature is available. This all goes on to confirm that the Sikh brethren are the part of the Hindu family". Bala Saheb further said that the philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib is similar to the Upanishadic philosophy which further substantiates the above said fact. He recited,

*" Hindu Hindu Ek Rahein,
Sab Panthon Ka Maan Karen,
Sab Granthon se Gyan Gahen,
Vahe Guru Akal Kahen,"*¹⁶⁵

to substantiate the RSS philosophy.

164 *Ibid.*

165 RSS *vis-à-vis* Punjab Problem, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1984, pp.11, 12.

The RSS chief tried to dispel the fears among the Sikhs that their existence would be endangered if they started considering themselves as the part of Hindu society. He quoted the examples of the Jains, a 2500 years old community and *lingayats* of Karantaka who inspite of their akinness to the Hinduism had maintained their separate identity. And there is no danger to their identity on account of their being a part of the Hindu society. Therefore, like other communities, the Sikhs too have a special place in the Hindu society. So their reasonable religious demands should be welcomed and accepted.¹⁶⁶

The RSS accused the Akalis of mixing up political and territorial demands with the religious demands, which were fraught with the dangerous consequences, as when mixed these created various problems and complications which also affected the non Sikh populace.¹⁶⁷ Bala Saheb Deoras during his speeches quoted Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal, who stated regarding the strained relation between the two communities. He said, "This is not possible, because the Sikhs and non Sikhs of Punjab had got blood relations between them and they belong to the same tradition and culture". So, Bala Saheb on the basis of this statement urged Longowal and his Akali colleagues to make efforts in this direction. He believed that the discord was created by the British and some other elements who tried to divide them by writing books and saying that Sikhs have got seprate entity and are not the part and parcel of Hindu society but the case is not so because during the partition both Sikhs and the non Sikhs suffered equally, they sunk and swam together, so their interest are same.¹⁶⁸

166 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

167 *Ibid.*

168 *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.

On the issue of extremism and Bhindranwale, the RSS chief asked both the communities to shun extremist views. He accepted Bhindranwala as a *sant* but accused him of using extremist language and lacking restraint. He said that the RSS believed the killing of unarmed and innocent persons had not been ordained by any religion, more so in Sikhism whose tenets are against all this. On the solution to the problem of extremism he said, optimistic outlook and trust upon each other was the key. Bala Saheb during his discourse mentioned the incident of killing of the non-Sikhs in the bus wherein one Sikh fellow tried to save the life of the non-Sikhs. In this regard he said that *Sant* Longowal wondered what other Sikh passengers were doing in the bus. Why did not they save their fellow passengers? Bala Saheb said "(...) this incident depicts both the situation of optimism and trust, and pessimism and distrust. And therefore we all should work for creating the environment of optimism and should stop shedding tears".¹⁶⁹

The solution to this problem according to the RSS chief was to create congeniality, act with restraint and be prepared for self-protection too. The extremist elements should be isolated and those supporting these elements should be contacted and explained regarding actuality. Even the extremists should be explained that what is in the interests of the state of Punjab and the country. Simultaneously, he opined, "we should work with patience and understanding, and be factual, therefore, not to be swayed by rumours and incorrect information." He further told that there might be Sikh brethren who had turned to extremism but there were many more that had disliked these activities and were sick of these incidents. He

169 Bala Saheb Deoras, *Punjab Problem and its Solution*, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1984, p.16.

urged his fellow non-Sikh brethren not to be provoked by these incidents, as this would deteriorate the Punjab situation. But this did not mean that we should not go for self-protection which was everybody's legal right, lest the limits of our honour should be crossed, he expressed. He also urged the government and the political leaders to fulfill their responsibility.¹⁷⁰

He asked them leaders that their policy of using tension to their benefits would ultimately ruin them. Here the slogan "Government that works", should be practised both in letter and spirit. He also urged the press for correct reporting and editing and therefore, be helpful in effecting a psychological change. Ultimately he turned to his cadres and asked them to meet the people with reasons and good feeling. There might be initial hiccups but ultimately they would understand that the ideology of the RSS was of right type to a large extent and merited deliberation. These psychological changes would ultimately percolate down to the hearts of the peoples and would usher piece and tranquility.¹⁷¹

In the spree of blame game the *Sangh* leadership accused their eternal political foe, the communists, for fanning Akalis separatism. They pointed their finger towards the hobnobbing between CPI (M) leader H.S Surjeet and G. S. Tohra, the saber rattling president of SGPC. The RSS also blamed Tohra, Surjeet and company for the passing of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, which the RSS viewed as an extremist act. The further accused CPI (M) of endorsing the principle of "Self Determination of the Nationalities" during the days of partition under the influence of its Muslim leaders. They said that they were doing the same thing by liaisoning with the

170 *Ibid.*p.17.

171 *Ibid.*p.18.

Akalis who were talking about "Bangladesh type freedom movement" and "Soviet type constitutional right" for the "Sikh *quam*" to secede from India.¹⁷²

However, the RSS also could not keep itself aloof from petty politics even on the sensitive issue of Punjab terrorism. The Congress accused the RSS of fuelling violence and hatred in the region. But the *Sangh* refuted charges by saying that it was old Congress ploy to make RSS scapegoat for all their follies and failures. The RSS reiterated back that the Congress and their government had failed in their duty to curb the wave of terrorism and hatred spread by the extremists, through the press statement issued by Narain Dass, the state organizer of Punjab unit of the RSS.¹⁷³ Lala Hansraj Gupta, the *prant sanghchalak* of the RSS too stated that the RSS always kept itself aloof from the party politics and declared in the context of the Punjab problem that Sikhs formed an integral part of the Hindu society. He appealed all the countrymen to maintain amity and peace in prevailing explosive and provocative situation and not to be misled by deliberate and totally false propoganda against the RSS.¹⁷⁴

The RSS also responded to the Akali allegation of the discrimination against the Sikhs. They presented facts and figures revealing that the Sikhs were in dominant position in Punjab. They said that ever since independence only the Sikhs had been the cabinet ministers in the central government. It was Baldev Singh, then Swaran singh and Zail Singh. Even in the Janta government Badal and Barnala were the ministers from Punjab. Out of the eleven ministers of the cabinet rank in Punjab, seven including the chief minister were the

172 *Organiser*, July 1, 1983.

173 *Press Statement*, RSS Punjab State, Chandigarh, February 21, 1984.

174 Statement issued by Lala Hansraj Gupta, quoted in *RSS vis-a-vis Punjab Problem*, p. 19.

Sikhs. Of the twenty-two secretaries, seven including the chief secretary, were the Sikhs. Similarly, five of the twelve deputy commissioners, seven of the twelve senior superintendent of the police and two of three deputy inspector general of the police were the Sikhs. They further said that almost two-third of the fifty-eight or so heads of department were Sikhs. At the grass root departments like agriculture and cooperatives the Sikh employees were more than seventy five percent. The vice chancellors at – Patiala, Ludhiana and Amritsar were the Sikhs. Similarly, in the armed forces the Sikhs constituted more in proportion to their total population.¹⁷⁵ However, these facts and figure given by the RSS though illustrative one did harm its own efforts at cementing the ties between the two communities in spite of the fact that these were true to a large extent.

Efforts Made by the RSS in Improving the Punjab Situation:

The RSS was deeply concerned with the deteriorated Punjab situation in the 1980s. In spite of being a socio-cultural organization with ostensibly non-political aims, the RSS could not help but indulging in the solution of the messy socio-political problem. The leadership ordered its cadres to adopt constructive measures for a solution to the problem and not to hibernate on the thought that their's is a voluntary organization meant only for social work. They felt that the RSS's *swayamsevaks* should not also think that any action on their part might create reactionary situations. The RSS therefore, on its part adopted two types of measures, first universal measures and second organizational measures.¹⁷⁶

175 *Organiser*, November 7, 1982.

176 "*Hum kya karen*", a pamphlet issued by the Punjab RSS on January 18, 1983. Also see, *My Dear Fellow Sikhs*, Suruchi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1987.

In the organizational measures the RSS appealed to its allied organizations (*Sangh Parivar*) viz. Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Hindu Raksha Samiti, Mazdoor Sangh, Bharat Vikas Parishad, Kisan Sangh and others of the similar ilk to issue statements and publish articles which should help in creating an amicable atmosphere. For example, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad should expand its sphere of work in the villages and its Sikh workers should form *dhadi jathas* for the purpose. It should issue statements and publish articles on religion, culture, tradition and make people aware of the fact that the present spree of violence is detrimental to all these. Hindu Suraksha Samiti should be more vocal in declaring that nobody has the right to harm the fabric of the Hindu society (Sikhs included). The Vidhyarathi Parishad should announce unequivocally that the students do not belong to any Panth and the whole student world is one. They must organize symposiums on the subject of 'Hindu - Sikh', research papers should be produced, essay competitions should be organized and debates should be initiated. The Kisan Sangh must try to expand its work in the villages, which would be helpful in establishing close contact with the Sikhs. It should rally the farmers on the issue that the present state of affairs has been ruining the agriculture and deteriorating the farmers' condition. The Mazdoor Sangh should develop itself in the cities and should try to bring Sikh workers to the forefront. The press associated with the *Sangh* too had a duty to perform. The enlightening articles *vis-à-vis* Punjab situation should be published and the facts should be disseminated among the non Punjabi press outside Punjab so that a clearer picture might be revealed. Lastly, the *Sangh* also appealed to its political wing and other friendly political parties to shun the attitude of politics for the political sake and work

constructively and honestly in the best interests of the state and the country.¹⁷⁷

Efforts to be Made Among the Masses by the Masses: As the Part of Universal Measures.

The RSS called upon the common masses to come forward and work for the solution of this problem. 'They should form forums or *samities* where day to day terrorist activities must be explained and condemned, the statement would be issued, if need arose should start agitations, processions, would give *dharanas*, arrange security for themselves, would send delegation to the authorities, i.e. to do all such activities ranging from extreme steps to the softer ones. The people should know the opinion of the others through such societies, *samities*, organizations, *etc.* and they should also be given proper vent and platform to put forward their views and actions. All these similar organizations should express their views on each other's platforms and fora. The intelligentsia in the society could be involved in these measures by urging them to organize seminars regarding the burning issues. Hundreds of the magazines, journals and newspapers which were being published in the country should come up with the constructive news, articles, write-ups, *etc.* pertaining to the current situation and possible remedial measure. The newspapers should publish the articles like, "Terrorist movement is causing harm to the trade", "Militancy is breaking down the society", "Economy is suffering", *etc.* These articles must be supplemented with accurate and full statistics. Along with this, newspapers should also come up with cartoons, jokes, advertisements, poems and letters to the editor depicting the present crisis and the duty of the people and the

177 *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3.

government towards it, they said.¹⁷⁸

Duty of the RSS and its *Swayamsevaks*:

The RSS itself came up with the following measures during that time

1. It published the articles dealing with the crisis situation and its resultant affects and distributed it among the people.
2. Intellectual papers were brought forward with the answers to the current questions.
3. It organized deliberative platforms on the titles like present situation and our duty. This became helpful in moulding the public opinion and answered many vexed questions.
4. The various RSS officials visited different areas of Punjab and in their *boudhik* they deliberated the current issues.
5. The special cyclo-styled literature was distributed among the *swayamsevaks* on various subjects.
6. The prominent RSS workers in the different areas tried to establish their contacts with the main local political figures and also with the Sikh brethren. This mutual contact ultimately resulted in removing many suspicious.
7. The *swayamsevaks* tried to bring more and more Sikhs in their *shakhas*, particularly in the evening *shakhas*.
8. The *shakhas* were organized in the Sikh localities.
9. The young *swayamsevaks* also tried to help those people and the families who suffered in the present crisis.
10. The Hindu society is one and on this basis the RSS did following things:-
 - I. It tried to establish family relations with the Sikh families.
 - II. The Sikhs were invited to the Hindu festivals, fairs and on other auspicious occasions.

178 *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

- III. The *swayamsevaks* themselves participated in the Sikh ceremonies and the festivals whole-heartedly.
- IV. Those *swayamsevaks* who were living with the Sikhs in the neighbourhood tried to follow the "good neighbour policy" *i.e.* they religiously participated in the happiness and gloom of their neighbours.
- V. In the various Hindu families where one brother was a Sikh *i.e. keshdhari* and other, a non-Sikh *i.e. mona*, came forward with the combined photographs of the two. These examples were also demonstrated in the *shakhas*.
- VI. The RSS also tried to mobilize its doctor, lawyer, teacher, intellectual, artist and trader *swayamsevaks* to work in their respective spheres.
- VII. The *swayamsevaks* were directed to go to the gurdwaras on the festive occasions and perform *shabad kirtans* there.
- VIII. During the occasions of *langar* and *sharbat* distribution, the *swayamsevaks* were directed to help the Sikhs.
- IX. The RSS also asked its cadres to bring their Sikh fellows to the temple programmes.
- X. The intellectual *swayamsevaks* were directed to come up with the articles on the Sikh faith like-Sikhism is eternal, Sikhism before the establishment of the Khalsa Panth, twenty four sub-sects of the Sikhs; impact of present situation on Sikhism and so on.¹⁷⁹

These directions on the part of RSS leadership to its cadres were some of the efforts to re-bring cordiality at the micro level and also to remove various doubts that cropped up in the minds

179 *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.

of the individual *swayamsevaks* due to the then prevailing circumstances.

The *Sangh Parivar* on March 3, 1983, organized *Vishal Hindu Dharma Sammelan*, at Amritsar with the aim of rallying Hindus on a common platform and to instil confidence and a feeling of security among the this minority in Punjab. In one of the resolutions adopted by the delegates, which included, *Maharana* Bhagwat Singh of Mewar, president of the *Sammelan* Karan Singh, former home minister Gulzarilal Nanda, the RSS *sarkaryavaha* (general secretary) Rajendra Singh, B.J.P. vice-president Vijaya Raje Scindia and Congress M.P. from Amritsar R.L.Bhatia, condemned the separatists and the extremists and urged the government of curb their activities with an iron-hand. An appeal was made to the people to maintain communal harmony. Rajendra Singh again voiced the *Sangh's* view that 'Sikhs are an inseparable part of the Hindu *samaj'*. In this *Sammelan*, besides the participation of large number of Hindus, many Sikhs particularly, the Namdharis and the *Mazhabi* Sikhs thronged in a considerable count. The highlight of this *Sammelan* was a 6 Km. long procession. Another prominent feature of the event was the *langar* service organized by the local Gurdwaras round the clock. Even the SGPC lent its helping hand for the arrangement of this event.¹⁸⁰

The motive of the VHP and of the RSS was well fulfilled by organizing this *Sammelan*. However, there was skepticism regarding the event, because some viewed it as a Hindu counterblast against the Akali agitation which could possibly fan Hindu fanaticism against the Sikh extremism. It was also feared that this would further the Sikh extremism and sepratism. However, these retrogressive

180 Organiser, April 3, 1983.

thoughts were nullified by the widespread participation of the Sikhs. The then Akali president Longowal even offered accommodation in the gurdwaras. The Hindu saints were joined by the Namdhari, and the Nirankari, *Mazahabi gurus*, beside other sub sects of the *Keshdhari* Sikhs.¹⁸¹ The whole conference was an inspiring pointer to a panacea which might well prove effective for the Punjab imbroglio.

The RSS under the banner of Punjab Kalyan Forum, an organization formed to work for the solution of the Punjab problem organized a symposium at Amritsar on the subject 'Punjab Today'. This symposium witnessed the participation of various scholars, leaders, defence personnel, from the two communities. The prominent ones were general J. S. Aruora (liberator of Bangladesh), Baldev Parkash (president Punjab BJP), Jeevan Singh Umranangal (prominent Akali leader), Kirpal Singh (BJP leader), Mann Singh (ex-principal, Medical College, Amritsar), and Lt. Col. Chanan Singh Dhillon (president Punjab Kalyan Forum), Dharamvir Sehgal (ex-president Punjab & Haryana High Court Bar Association), Charanjiv Singh (general secretary Punjab Kalyan Forum and later on the president of Rashtriya Sikh Sangat). In the symposium the delegates urged the silent majority of Punjabis to activate themselves in the national interest. General Aruora denounced the concept of *Khalistan* as a figment of imagination. Mann Singh, while addressing the audience declared that the Sikhs formed part and parcel of the Hindu community and their *panth* was born to protect the honour of the country. Charanjiv Singh denounced the bogey of "crisis of Sikh identity" and termed it as false and misconceived. He criticized communal fanatics and said that Sikhism could grow and spread by

181 Organiser, July 1, 1983.

restoring communal harmony.¹⁸²

Besides, indulging in the exercises ranging from organizing symposiums and *sammelans*, to mobilizing the *swayamsevaks* to work in the far off terror stricken villages, the most important and practical ground level work that RSS did was its formation of *Punjab Peedit Sahayata Samiti*. This organization was formed for the purpose of alleviating the miseries of the terror victims and to stop the migration of the Hindus from the villages of Punjab due to terror threat. The president of this *Samiti* was Jagatpal Khanna who was also the RSS *sanghchalak* of Amritsar and its secretary was Vedparkash Mahajan who was the *karyavaha* of the RSS in Amritsar.¹⁸³

The volunteers of this *Samiti* undertook the tours of those areas which were adversely affected by the extremism. In Gurdaspur district the volunteers of the *Samiti* visited the villages and acquainted themselves with the aggravated misery of the people due to the government's apathy. The *Sangh* volunteers who visited these villages for the survey included Charanjiv Lal Sharma (*seh-sanghathan mantri* of Punjab VHP), Krishen Vamotra (*sanghathan mantri* of Punjab VHP), Thuru Ram (president of Gurdaspur *nagar parishad*) and some others. Similar was the case in Amritsar district where Parkash Chand Joshi (*sangathan mantri* of Amritsar VHP) along with Charanjiv Lal Sharma undertook the similar exercise. These exercises were also repeated in other district of Punjab *viz.* Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, *etc.* In totality two hundred and fifty villages were surveyed.¹⁸⁴

182 *Organiser*, February 26, 1984.

183 *Punjab Sahayata Karya*, RSS Pamphlet issued by Punjab RSS at Amritsar, (n.d.), p. 1.

184 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

The experiences of these people involved in the surveys were heart rending. People told them that when they were being terrorized and killed by the terrorist, the district official were relaxing in their air conditioned offices. While telling their woes both *keshdharis* and *shejdharis* brought tears in their eyes. They also told them that the entire announcement made on *Akashvani*, *Doordarshan* and newspapers proved hollow. Many families didn't receive anything. The Sikhs were the equal victim of the violence and many of them were killed by the Sikh terrorists.¹⁸⁵

The *Punjab Peedit Sahayata Samiti* during its initial years collected around five lakh rupees. This amount was distributed among the terror victims of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Sujanpur, Batala, Fatehgarh Churian, Trantaran, Jandiala Guru, and the surrounding village areas. There were about one hundred and sixty two families who received this help. In another programme at Amritsar nineteen families were given sewing machines, thirty six were given blankets, the children of thirty six others families were given clothes, books and stationary, five girls of the victim families were married on the *Samiti's* expenses, children of the six families were provided admission in the I.T.I. Besides the effort of the *Samiti* the individual *swayamsevaks* in the *shakhas* at Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Trantaran, Batala, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Dhariwal, Muktsar, Zira collected five lakh rupees for the emergency fund to be distributed among the sufferers. In the cities of Amritsar, Ferozepur, Batala and some others the RSS *swayamsevaks* donated about one hundred nine bottles of blood to three hundred persons wounded by the terrorists along with two hundred bottles of glucose. According to the doctors

185 *Ibid.*

life saving drugs amounting seventy thousand rupees were also distributed. Besides the medical aid, the victims and their families were also provided with the food and shelter and the totally uprooted families were assisted in rehabilitation and as far as possible the workable member of these families were helped in getting jobs. This work of the RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was also lauded by the Punjab government and the local deputy commissioners.¹⁸⁶

On the lines of *Punjab Peedit Sahyata Samiti*, the Bharat Vikas Parishad started *Ekta Abhiyan* in New Delhi in 1983. The reason that this movement was started in New Delhi and not in Punjab was due to the fact that the RSS felt that Akali agitations had created an atmosphere of suspicion in Punjab whereby it had become difficult for them to convince the Sikhs living there. New Delhi, by the virtue of its sizeable Sikh population therefore was better ground. The aim of this movement was to identify the prominent personalities among the Hindus and the Sikhs and to initiate a dialogue process on intellectual, emotional and sociological plane. Bharat Vikas Parishad under this *Abhiyan* decided to undertake three programmes:

- 1) To organize a symposium on the subject "The contribution of Sikh *Gurus* and other writers in Hindi literature."
- 2) On 14th August 1983 to start a programme of collecting material regarding India's partition.
- 3) To organize poem, story, essay, debate and drama competition among the children on the eve of Guru Teg Bahadur's martyrdom day.

For the above programmes Bharat Vikas Parishad contacted various Sikh educational institutions in Delhi, Sikh

186 *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

publishing houses, Sikh cultural and social institutions, gurdwara *prabandhak samitis*, Sikh intellectuals, writers, leaders *etc.* The Sikhs endorsing nationalist views and the Sikhs with separatist feelings and lastly the leaders of various sub-sects of the Sikhism *viz.* Namdharis, Udasis, Nirankaris, Radhaswamis, Sant Kirpalites, *etc.* were also taken along.¹⁸⁷

The year 1984 was fateful in the history of Punjab. The sad course of events led to the Operation Blue Star to flush out terrorists from the Golden Temple precincts. The Punjab RSS could not help but be affected by the events succeeding to the operation. The *Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha* of the RSS passed a resolution to this effect in March 1984 at Nagpur. In the resolution RSS strongly objected to the hoisting of *Khalistani* flag over the Golden Temple and the burning of Indian constitution by the Akali Dal. However, it lauded the common Punjabi who still cherished the traditional feeling of mutual social unity and amity. It also congratulated the brethren of Punjab for maintaining their balance of mind in spite of grave provocations. It commanded its workers to continue their work of enlightening the people and steeling their will against the separatist pulls.¹⁸⁸

The RSS expressed its anguish at the sad course of events, which made the army action inevitable in Punjab to flush out terrorists to from the Golden Temple complex. It accused the government and the Akali Dal for this sad event. It, however, lauded Indian army in accomplishing the task entrusted to it and respecting religious sentiments of the people even at the cost of precious lives of its own personnel. The RSS expressed sympathy with the Sikhs who

187 Bharat Vikas Parishad, *Rashtriya Ekta Abhiyan*, A Pamphlet issued by Bharat Vikas Parishad, New Delhi, 1983.

188 *Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha*, Resolution No.2, March 1984, RSS, Nagpur.

were distressed due to the defiling of the holy place. But simultaneously, added that the holy place was already defiled by the terrorists who had converted it into an impregnable fortress. It also accused the SGPC of failure in the discharge of its responsibility of preserving the sanctity the Harmandir Sahib that was the point of veneration not only with the Sikh masses but also for whole of Hindu society. It again appealed Punjabis to remain vigilant against the separatist tendencies.¹⁸⁹

After the military operation, in order to lend helping hand and reinitiate a feeling of good will towards the Sikhs, the RSS offered itself for *kar seva* at the Golden Temple complex but only at the willingness of the SGPC and without involving itself in any controversy.¹⁹⁰ However, it was still in favour keeping army in the state since the situation was still far away from being normal.¹⁹¹ Lajpat Rai, vice-president of the Punjab RSS released a pamphlet entitled 'Agony of Punjab - a plea for soul searching.' It said that agony of Punjab is too deep for tears. Its self-respect had been grievously wounded. The situation called for a through introspection.¹⁹² He said that though the army action was inevitable but it offered no permanent solution to the problem. He further said, "We must ponder over the ramifications of allowing politician to use religious places for their petty political gains in the name of *dharma* and *panth*".¹⁹³

The Deendayal Research Institute, New Delhi (Institute of

189 Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha, Resolution No.2, July 8, 1984, RSS, Hyderabad.

190 The Tribune, Chandigarh, July 20, 1984.

191 The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, July 20, 1984.

192 The Agony of Punjab, a Pamphlet issued by Punjab RSS, Amritsar, July 1984.

193 The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, July 20, 1984.

RSS think-tank), too was not behind in initiating the peace measures. On July 3, 1984, it organized a symposium by inviting various prominent personalities of the civil society. The RSS was represented by its *sarkaryavaha* Rajinder Singh and the symposium was presided over by Nanaji Deshmukh, chairman of Deendayal Research Institute. The deliberations were held on the issues like how the separatist mentality and the feeling of alienation among the Sikhs be tackled? How the questions that arose due to the military action in Punjab should be answered? What RSS and other organizations of the similar ilk can do positively in these states of affairs? And what future course of action should be adopted in creating an atmosphere of cordiality, amity and peace in the social life?¹⁹⁴

This, however, was one-sided picture of the RSS story during the era of terrorism. Fear is one of the basic instincts of the humans and how much timid one may be the fear factor forces every individual to go for self-protection. These self-protective measures sometime amounts to offending the other. The case was similar with the Punjab RSS also. Notwithstanding their repeated rhetoric of amity and brotherhood *vis-à-vis* Sikhs, the RSS undergroundly was quite prepared for any eventuality.¹⁹⁵ The RSS cadres were ordered to gear up for their self-protection along with the protection of their constituency, the Hindus. The *nagar*, ward and *mohalla suraksha samitis* (protection committees) were built to bolster the confidence of the minority Hindus in the Sikh dominated areas or the areas where

194 Deendayal Research Institute, "Invitation Letter", New Delhi, June 25, 1984. Copy at RSS Headquarters, Keshavkunj, Jhandewalan, New Delhi.

195. This whole narrative is based upon researcher's personal interviews with those RSS workers were active in chalking out these offensive measures and their plan of action in case of wide spread violence. However, on their request their names have been withheld.

the terrorist activities were in full swing. These committees, however, worked stealthily and the people for whose protection these committees had been formed were sometimes unaware of these.

During the height of terrorism, the prominent RSS personnel had established their contacts with the government agencies, particularly the Punjab police. The *swayamsevaks* who had formed the self-defence committees were provided with the weapons. These arms were sometimes deliberately given by the government and many a times these were procured by the RSS on its own or given to it by its sympathizers. The spy network of the RSS was instrumental in generating informations regarding the terrorist's plan of action and their hideouts. These informations, besides for RSS's self interests was also shared with the government, which sometimes helped it in busting out the terror plans. The arms training too formed an important part of the RSS planned offensive. The weapon training, though, was meant primarily for the self-protection sake, could not be done in open. For the purpose therefore, an interesting strategy was adopted.

As in those days due to the extra ordinary circumstances, the gun licenses were easily released. The *swayamsevaks* and other RSS symphatizers after getting requisite permission to use a gun trained themselves in the border areas of Punjab adjoining Himachal Pradesh and sometimes in Himachal Pradesh itself. The areas of Kangra district like Kangra, Nurpur, Indora and other smaller towns and villages served as training arena for the *swayamsevaks*. These areas were contiguous with Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur districts of Punjab and so reaching out there was not much difficult. These whole exercises were performed so stealthily that even the people (residents) of these areas remained unaware of it. The RSS people who approached these areas were the chosen few (some of them were

the ex-army men). They introduced themselves as the hunters to the locals and because of the widespread forest cover and presence of wild animals like boars, wild goats, rabbits, partridges, *etc.* in these areas, they were easily acknowledged as such. The *swayamsevaks* of those areas provided them with all the material (food, lodging, *etc.*) and logistical support. But curiously enough, these secretive exercises were not even known to everyone in the RSS itself.

The increased terrorist attacks on the RSS *swayamsevaks* and its *shakhas* (though the two major attacks on the RSS *shakhas* at Moga and Ludhiana occurred after 1984 *i.e.* beyond the time frame of the present research) justified the RSS stance. Another important thing that is unfolded by these RSS people (whom I interviewed) that in case of an all out attack on the Hindus of Punjab,¹⁹⁶ the *Sangh* was prepared to supply the Hindu volunteers with the weapons which might well be procured from other states also. In other words, the Hindus who might be unaware of this RSS design were the real ammunition of the RSS in its scheme of things. This vividly depicts that though, the RSS was for creating an atmosphere of belief, amity and brotherhood in Punjab by working out various measures ranging from peace marches to organize *sammelans* to enlisting more and more Sikhs as its *swayamsevaks*, it was equally prepared for any possible conflict. This precisely meant that during the reign of terrorism the overt measures undertaken by the *Sangh* were of peaceful nature but covertly, they had also made their weapons ready, thus proving the maxim that if you want peace, be prepared for the war, true.

196. Bhindrawala was saying that it would not be a problem for the Sikhs to deal with the Hindus as for every Sikh there were thirty-five Hindus, not even thirty six.

Now, if we compare these measures undertaken by the Hindu nationalists with those of the communist parties in Punjab we can say that latter's were widely known. Let us have a synoptic look at the communist response *vis-à-vis* terrorism. The social scientists, Puri, Judge and Sekhon in their work¹⁹⁷ vividly described the initiatives taken by the communists in fighting the terrorism. They arrived at the conclusion that all the communists, irrespective of the party *viz.* CPI, CPI (M) and groups of Naxalites, were highly critical of the Sikh militants and the terrorists. From their fieldwork these authors showed that many communist affiliated families confronted the terrorists openly. However, unlike the RSS who was chagrined by the Congress regime but often found supporters in the Akali Dal, the comrades were targeted by the state [both Congress and the Akalis] as the enemies of the system. Due to their ideology they were also frequently targeted by the terrorists who looked upon them as the enemies of the Sikh *panth*. So they were the victims of the terrorists along with the disinterested state who didn't interfere for their protection.¹⁹⁸

However, with the passage of time and increased terrorist violence later on, the state and the Punjab police discovered that the communists were a suitable ally in fighting terrorism, so, as previously told in the case of the RSS, the communists were also provided with the arms and other help. The police also provided protection and assistance to the newspapers belonging to the Left. In the course of violence, of all the communists, CPI came closest to the police in dealing with the terrorism and therefore, many times justified

197. H.K.Puri, P.S. Judge and Jagrup Singh Sekhon, *Terrorism in Punjab: Under standing the Grassroots Reality*, Har Anand, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 169-179.

198. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

some of the illegal actions of the police in dealing with the terrorism.¹⁹⁹ The authors presented the examples of three villages namely; *Vadala Kalan*, *Harsha Chhina* and *Bhikhiwind*, where the communist parties' affiliated families resisted various attacks of the terrorists successfully with the aid of state and even one of these families was awarded with the *Shaurya Chakra* by the president in 1994.²⁰⁰

By comparing and contrasting the measures of the RSS with those of the communists and latter's more acknowledgement could be attributed to the concentration of the RSS in the urban areas of Punjab and those of comrades in the countryside. The incidents of the terrorist violence were more in the rural areas, where there actions were aimed at those groups who were anti-thetical to them (communists, who always shun the concept of religion based state). But in sharp contrast, the urban areas witnessed the terrorist activity aimed at disrupting the normal life and predominantly was not aimed at any particular group (*e.g.* bomb blasts at public places, buses, trains *etc.* or indiscriminate firings). So no particular group in the cities came all out against the terrorists. It was only when the Hindus became the clay pigeons for the terrorists and when latter began to hit them discriminately in the buses, trains, *etc.* the organization like Hindu Suraksha Samiti came into sight (this again is beyond the ambit of the present research). This organization and others of the similar ilk, which cropped up in other cities of Punjab had the cadre strength of the RSS. So again true to its secretive character and aversion to publicity, the RSS remained in the backdrop pulling the strings.

199. *Ibid.*

200. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Moreover, in the initial spate of violence, the terrorists were targeting those people were most vocal in their dissent. These were the communists in the villages and the Aryas and moderate Sikhs (Lala Jagat Narain, Ramesh, Virender, Sumeet Singh, V.K.Tiwari *etc.*) in the cities. Now, the violence against the communists was clearly directed and the targets were the chosen few concentrated in the rural areas and in the initial stages were left to fend for them by the state. But in the case of the Hindus, they as a community were not the initial targets. So the RSS response in the initial phase was lackadaisical and they preferred to keep a low profile. It was only after 1985 when their *shakhas* became the specific targets of the terrorist; they overtly started showing aggressive postures, which were manifested in the culmination of *Virat Hindu Sammelan* at Amritsar in 1985.

The RSS and the Riots of November 1984:

The anti Sikh riots followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. The conflagration spread over the whole north India, but the epicenter of the mayhem was Delhi where approximately 2,000 adult males were killed.²⁰¹ Though the actual figures were much more. The spread of the tentacles of Punjab terrorism to Delhi and that too at the mainstay of the security of the state, in the person of the Prime Minister was bound to prove the fall of big tree theory, true. The Hindus who constituted the heart of that state had to teach a lesson.²⁰² In the task they were actively supported by the Congress cadres. The pro-Hindu

201. "Who are the guilty? Causes and Impacts of the Delhi Riots", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 24, 1984, P.1979.

202. M.Weiner, "India's Minority: Who are they? What do they want?" in J.R.Roach (ed.), *India 2000 : The Next Fifteen Decades*, South Asia Books, Rivedale, 1986, p. 119.

bias of the government was vividly discernible. What was the RSS doing at this stage? Interestingly enough, its critics alleged that the RSS cadres were in the forefront of organizing riots along with the frenzied mob.²⁰³ But the RSS documents revealed altogether different picture.

The RSS in the wake of riots followed by the murder of Indira Gandhi in the fitness of its ideology *i.e.* of composite Hindu nation of which the Sikhs constituted important constituent came forward for their help. Throughout Delhi and in some parts of Haryana they came forward for arranging services and organizing protection squads.²⁰⁴ There is a brief zone wise report of its activities in Delhi during the riots:

(i) South Zone: At Nanakpura, with the intervention of the RSS workers the local gurdwara was saved from being by the hooligans. Similarly, at Vinay Nagar inspite of *swyamsevaks* attempts, gurdwara could not be saved but the lives of some of the inmates were saved and they were provided with food and shelter in a nearby colony. At Kalkaji, a group of about hundred social workers led by Jeevan Kalra, Harish, Pushpendra, Shatrughana and Kamal Kant Kalra organised patrol in the entire area in order to keep the morale of the people high. In Bala Saheb Gurdwara at Bhagwan Nagar, opposite Maharani Bagh, about one thousand persons including children and women had come from different parts of Delhi too seek shelter, particularly from Trilokpur Ashram, Sunlight Colony and Bhagwan Nagar itself. The RSS units of Lajpat Nagar and Greater Kailash

203. Interview with Shamsul Islam at Patiala during the Punjab History Conference on March 15, 2008.

204. RSS: In service of Nov'. 84 Riot Victims, Keshav Samarak Samiti, New Delhi,(n.d.), p.5.

visited this camp on November 5, 1984 and met Ram Singh Bhandari, the incharge of the camp, to find out as to what kind of help they could render to them. The RSS here made necessary arrangements for *atta, dal, sugar, vegetable oil, milk powder, tea, washing soap, etc.* on the same day. Swadesh Pal Gupta, the organizing secretary of south Delhi zone of the RSS looked after that camp with the help of other *swayamsevaks*. Lala Hans Raj Gupta, the *prant sanghchalak* of Delhi-Haryana state visited the camp on November 6, 1984. Kushal Kishore, the *prant pracharak* of Delhi-Haryana state personally drew the list of the missing persons and deputed some RSS workers to trace them out.²⁰⁵

North Zone: Sardar Uttam Singh, chief of the *gurdwara prabandhak committee*, Majlis Park was overwhelmed by the behaviour of the RSS workers. He reportedly said that it was because of the RSS that the gurdwaras in the area could be saved. The same happened in the Indira Nagar area where the RSS workers had kept day and night vigil for three days to save the gurdwara from the arsonists. Devi Chand Chopra, the north Delhi RSS organizer, arranged food and other articles for the Sikhs who took shelter in old Sabzimandi Thana. At Keshav Puram, Devi Lal an RSS worker, showed courage in saving taxis from being burnt. These taxis belonged to the Sikhs and in the ensuing conflict with the mob he suffered bruises. At Vivekanand Puri, Shanti Swaroop, the district organizer of the RSS gave shelter to Sardar Ishwar Singh and his tenant in his house. K.S.Bhatia, a staunch subscriber to the ideology of the RSS saved the house of Jaswant Singh from being burnt by saying that the house belonged to him.²⁰⁶

205. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6. Also interview with Ram Singh and Kashmiri Lal, at New Delhi.

206. *Ibid.*, p. 6, 7. Also interview with Swatantar Pal Singh Namdhari at his residence Paharganj, New Delhi on October 3, 2007.

Central Zone (Karol Bagh and Patel Nagar Areas): Here the gurdwara of Khalsa Nagar was attacked by unruly youngsters, but the local RSS activists namely Raj Kumar, Sanjay, Kultar and Avtar averted the situation. The gurdwara was saved and important articles from the gurdwara were shifted to the houses of the *Sangh* workers. Further, Mahender along with Raj Kumar, Sanjay and Laxman Atal (an ex-councillor), the leading RSS workers of the area by approaching the panicked Sikhs assured them of every possible help. In Patel Nagar area, the organising secretary of the Karol Bagh zone, Om Prakash Sharma arranged to lodge some Sikhs in his house, as well as in the houses of so many other RSS *swayamsevaks*. The *prant sanghchalak*, Hans Raj Gupta and the *prant pracharak* Kushal Kishore visited a camp at Ajmal Khan Park where about 200 men, women and children had taken refuge. Among others, these beleaguered Sikhs were being looked after by the *nagar sanghchalak* Daulat Ram Ahuja.²⁰⁷

East Zone: The trans - Yamuna region was the worst affected area, particularly Trilok Puri, Nand Nagri, Loni road and Shakarpur. Here the RSS workers helped in the relief work manned by the government machinery in Shyam Lal College and the adjacent, Higher Secondary school. This camp was visited by Kaushal Kishore along S.C.Bajpai, the senior RSS figure of Delhi. In the Ghonda-Maujpur area, in the wake of barbarism, one Sushil along with other RSS workers saved the lives of Avtar Singh and six members of his family. Similarly, Kehar Singh, Bharamjit Singh and Shrowan Singh, along with their families were accommodated in the houses of Suraj Prakash and Desh Raj. Similarly, the *granthi* of the gurdwara of Yamuna Vihar was saved by the RSS worker, Pravesh Kumar, an advocate by profession.

207. RSS: In Service of November 84, Riot Victims, op. cit., p. 7, 8.

In the the areas of Seelampur, Rohtas Nagar, Nand Nagri, Seema Puri, Durga Puri, at least twenty five Sikh families were sheltered in the houses of the RSS workers. At Shahadra, Satish Aggarwal, a member of Delhi municipal corporation received injuries while saving a gurdwara from being burnt. The Kailash Nagar gurdwara, biggest in the locality was saved from being burnt by the strict vigilance of Hari Chandra and his fellow RSS workers. At Shakarpur, Shyam Sunder, secretary VHP trans-Yamuna area, gave shelter to the Sikh families. The similar exercises were repeated in the areas of Trilokpuri Kalyanpuri and Khichripur. At Trilokpuri Ishwar Dass Mahajan, who later on became the joint-secretary of Delhi-Haryana *prant* RSS, helped the victims financially.²⁰⁸

Rural Zone: The rural zone included the areas of Narela, Najafgarh, Nangloi, Mangolprui and Sultanpuri. Here too the RSS workers Shyam and Rishpal helped the victim's inspite of murder threats. The RSS worker Shyam kept important articles and the daughter of a victim Sikh family in his house. At Nangloi, Sardar Malkiat Singh and some other Sikhs were saved because of the prompt cooperation of Prakash, Mohan and Sri Chandra, the local RSS social workers. There were certain riot victims of the Mongolpuri area who were financially helped by the RSS head office at Jhandenwalan.²⁰⁹

West Zone (*Subash* Nagar Area): In this zone there were the certain pockets where the Sikhs were in considerable count. The local RSS worker Madan Lal helped the relatives of his neighbour who were trapped in a factory, which was set on fire. He brought them safe in his car. He also saved the life of an elderly Sikh who otherwise would

208. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

209. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

have been roasted alive in the gurdwara of Uttam Nagar. The B.J.P. councillors of this area namely *Subash* Arya, Mukand Lal Katyal and Om Prakash Wadhwa saved the lives of five Sikh brothers caught up in a fire at Naraiana. They with the help of some other people helped in dousing off the fire in certain factories owned by the Sikhs. Similarly Mukund Lal Katyal saved the lives of the family members of a Sikh clergyman, *Gyani* Ram Singh, of village Matiyala who had already been killed. The Tagore Garden gurdwara targeted by the hooligans was saved by Govind Ram Babbar, a prominent worker of the RSS along the like minded people and the fellow Sikhs. At Rajouri Garden, the shops of the Sikhs were burnt but some of them were saved by the timely action of well meaning people, which included the RSS workers Parimal Joshi, Kala and Ramesh Khanna. In an interesting incident one Shyam Lal Aggarwal of Rajouri Garden went to Palam Airport to receive a relative of his Sikh neighbour by getting a curfew pass through *Subash* Arya, the metropolitan councillor of the area. At Jaidev Park, one Sharwan Kumar the RSS secretary of the area with his fellow RSS workers saved the owner of 'Simco Hair Fixer' and two other Sikh families. Pran Nath Khanna, a prominent swayamsevak of the same area rescued Ajit Singh who worked in the telephone exchange of Rajouri Garden. On November 1, at Mayapuri Phase-1, Mahender Kumar Mehta, a factory owner (B-116) and secretary of the west zone RSS along with others persuaded the mob of 50 to 60 persons who had gathered to attack the factory of Iqbal Singh known as 'Modern Machine Tools'. The Madipur area of West Delhi was the resettlement colony. Here, the RSS workers Kush Lal Khorana, Bhagwat Yadav, Dharampal Atul, Rameshwar Yadav, Niranjana and Madkiran Bhatia saved the life and shop of a Sikh who happened to be the Congress (I) worker. They provided to the families of the Sikhs of

the area safe passage towards the nearby relief camp.²¹⁰

At Janakpuri, the *nagar sanghchalak*, Kishori Lal Sharma along with Sant Ram Verma, the district secretary of the area, saved Sat Pal Singh from humiliation at the hands of hooligans. He also took personal interest in the relief camp of the area. Besides saving the life and property of the Sikhs in Delhi, the RSS also conducted mass contact campaign in the second week of November in which 3000 *swayamsevaks* in the batches of ten each approached Sikh and non Sikh families appealing them to maintain peace.²¹¹

Even after displaying a sense of support and service towards the ordinary Sikhs during the riots, the RSS was also skeptical of the general Sikh behaviour in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's murder. This was shown by the senior RSS's ideologue and the then head of Deendayal Research Institute, Nanaji Deshmukh. In his pamphlet called 'Moments of Soul Searching'²¹² released on *Guru Nanak Diwas*, November 8, 1984, he claimed that the treacherous murder of Indira Gandhi was the tragic culmination of the poisonous campaign of the separatism, antagonism and violence conducted over the previous three years in which the innocents lost their lives and the sanctity of the religious places was destroyed. He said that barring few exceptions, the Sikh community observed silence for a long time on the barbaric massacres and heinous killings of the innocent people, but they condemned the long pending army action with anger and dangerous explosiveness.

210. Interview with Tarlochan Singh Gill, president BJP unit Moga, on September 2, 2007.

211. Interview with Ram Singh and Ashok Prabhakar at Jhandewalan.

212. This article was published in the Hindi weekly *Pratipaksh* in its November 25, 1984 edition and also reproduced in Shamsul Islam, *Religious Dimensions of Indian Nationalism: A Study of RSS*, Media House, New Delhi, 2006, Appendix, pp, 262-269.

He further said that country was stunned at the attitude of the Sikhs and Indira Gandhi was compared with Ahmed Shah Abdali, the Operation Blue Star as '*Gallu Ghara*' and Bhindrawale as 'martyr'. The RSS therefore believed that display of such feelings on the part of the Sikhs in India and abroad played a special role in increasing the distrust and alienation between the Sikhs and the rest of Indians. So this explosive situation needed utmost patience and skilful conduct on the part of our Sikh brothers and a revaluation of their history will provide them an opportunity to see many wrong formulations of their own religion and past which had been drilled systematically in their brains by the distorted historical writings of the British administrators. So a self introspection, revaluation and disinterested analysis of their own enlightened interests would be enough to make them understand that their fate is indivisibly linked with the destiny of India.

Though here, this document is mentioned in gist only but an unbiased and disinterested look on it will show the general feeling of the non-Sikhs that was prevailing in India in general and in Punjab in particular. The RSS even though propagated the Hindu-Sikh amity in the height of terrorism and even today but it could not escape from its biasness infavour of the Hindus. The anti-Sikh or to be precise the un-Sikh overtones of this pamphlet showed that the RSS was averse to any such leanings and attitudes which might hinder their agenda. Moreover, during those times its own political wing (BJP) was virtually non-descript and therefore, they were looking upon the Congress leadership, particularly Indira Gandhi as a bulwark against the terrorist onslaught. They even in the early part of 1984 had started demanding the handing over of Punjab to the army along with the Hindu Mahasabha.²¹³ Also the Congress, at least in Punjab in those

213. The Tribune, Chandigarh, January 3 and February 20, 1984.

times, had acquired and hijacked the Hindu nationalistic agenda as it had done in the war against Pakistan in 1971, when the RSS had openly praised her.

Notwithstanding this pamphlet, the general account of RSS's service to the riot victims might be skewed in the favour of casting the organization in good light because several other social organizations were also doing the same task. But even if some part of this was to be believed, we could safely assume that the role of the RSS was positive *vis-à-vis* the Sikh riot victims. This was acknowledged by those Sikhs who might themselves were not the sufferers but were witness to the sufferings of their fellow co-religionists who migrated to Punjab in the wake of this pogrom. Even Kushwant Singh acknowledged the help rendered by the *Sangh* in saving Sikhs.²¹⁴ The possible reason for this approach towards the victim Sikhs in Delhi was the RSS's viewpoint regarding Hindu nation of which the Sikhs constituted the sword arm and the basic notion that 'Sikhs are Hindus' formed cornerstone of this service. Even though, the RSS was bitterly critical of the Sikhs terrorism and *Khalistan* and the events of Punjab (*i.e.* killings of innocent Hindus and thus their forced migration) had its effect on its psyche but still they viewed Sikhs as an inalienable part of the mother Hindu society and their belief that one day the Sikhism would automatically submerge into the Hinduism and external differentiation will lose their meaning. As explained earlier in the preceding pages that the RSS's overt efforts

214 Interview with Balwinder Singh at Mukerian, Kulwant Singh Rajput at Moga and Mukhtiar Singh at Narot Jaimal Singh (Gurdaspur). Even veteran journalist Khushwant Singh said, 'I must give due credit to RSS and the BJP for showing courage for protecting Sikhs during those difficult days' cited in Khushwant Singh, "Congress (I) is the Most Communal Party", *Publik Asia*, November 16, 1989.

to diffuse the Hindu-Sikh tension was supplanted by its covert measures to tackle the menace by the arms. But the events of Delhi provided them an opportunity to prove its credentials as a messiah organization standing for the Hindu-Sikh unity and so they did not let it pass wasted. In addition to this, the RSS also got an opportunity to expand its base among the Sikhs, particularly the business class (*khatri*s), and subsequently to ease out the tensions many Sikh *swayamsevaks* were dispatched to Punjab. This approach, however, was non-political keeping in view the socio-cultural character of the *Sangh* was also of limited consequence and thus did not aided much in solving the vexed issue of Punjab's terrorism.

Conclusion: This span of nineteen years for the Punjab RSS was eventful. It went through several patches both favourable and lean. After 1966 it tried to reorient itself due to the changed ground situations of new Punjab. Its leadership tried to douse the ill will generated during the language controversy and the Punjabi *Suba* agitations. In the coming times therefore, the RSS showed remarkable singleness of the purpose *i.e.* in integrating the Sikhs within the broad Hindu fold, which was proved in its (Jana Sangh) alliance with the Akalis during the elections. But still, the mutual bickerings often lead to the parting of ways, (though it was more of a case with the Jana Sangh as a political party). The Anandpur Resolution was the sore point in the ideals of the RSS who believed in the singularity of the *Hindu Rashtra* of which the Buddishts, the Jains and the Sikhs (*i.e.* Indian communities) formed an inalienable part. This manoeuvring on the part of the RSS yielded in expansion of its base in the rural areas among the Sikhs and but not without earning wrath from the extremist elements who even added a clause in the Anandpur Resolution demanding the countrywide ban on the RSS.

The RSS believed itself a patriotic organization always at the service of the nation. Again, like in 1962 and 1965 wars, the RSS proved its patriotic credentials by assisting the civil and the military authorities in the war efforts. In spite of being the favourite whipping boy of the secular Congress, it called Indira Gandhi '*Durga*' for her brave handling of the war and carving out Bangladesh from Pakistan. Punjab was one of the war fronts, so the Punjab RSS in most of the towns and cities worked in the forefront by providing men; moral and material help to the authorities. This display of national service and patriotism was inborn to an extent (because the aggressor was Muslim Pakistan) but was also due to the circumstances prevailing, which demanded the proof of credibility from an organization, looked upon suspiciously by its friends, detractors and neutral beings alike. However, the gain here was for the RSS and not for the Jana Sangh in Punjab because large part of the Punjabi electorate transferred its votes to the Congress. The refugees from West Punjab who hitherto were the constituency of the Jana Sangh now started finding in Indira Gandhi, a Prime Minister prepared to deal firmly with Pakistan.²¹⁵ So the Hindu nationalists now turned to more populist and nationalist arguments, tried to project themselves as one who had faith in India and respected its constitution and were also prepared to do their bit for it.

The death of Golwalkar created a void which was swiftly filled by the next designate, Bala Saheb Deoras. However, the absence of Golwalkar as compared to other parts with RSS presence was felt more in Punjab. This was due to Golwalkar's personal attachment with the province. After the death of Hedgewar, it was

215. The Hindu, March 18, 1972.

Golwalkar who wanted Punjab to be the bastion of the RSS that was why the Punjab unit of the RSS was one of the largest beneficiaries of Golwalkar's visits and his personal attention. But the new *sarsanghchalak's* interest in the politics found expression in increasing the RSS activism in Punjab. His activism was hued with increasing populist strategies of the RSS, which were meant for its penetration in the whole body of the society. Thus as in other parts of India, the Punjab RSS started combining its *sangathanist* method with the propaganda of a kind that could possibly mobilize public opinion (both Hindus and Sikhs) *en bloc*. The shunning of the publicity clause now had to be amended.²¹⁶ So it was in this context that the RSS jumped on J.P.'s bandwagon during the Internal Emergency. The Total Revolution provided the RSS with an opportunity to work in close cooperation with organizations of markedly different ideals and opinions. In Punjab, though the Akalis and the Jana Sanghis had past experience of working together, but that was electoral understanding. Now during the Emergency their kinship increased further because 'common grievance was a greater binding force than shared happiness'. So in the jail both Akali and the RSS workers got better opportunity of knowing and understanding each others ideas which is proved good till today.

The affinities aroused between the RSS and the other opponents of the Congress demonstrated that these were opportunistic as well as of real conjunction whereby certain common ideals, political practices and rivals gel them together. The invocation of the Gandhian ideals, along with those of Vinoba Bhave and Golwalkar by the RSS tactically meant to generate support and to gain respectability from the masses that before the Emergency were

216. W.K. Andersen and S. Damle, op. cit. p. 115.

drifting apart from the Hindu nationalists. Therefore, the prior antipathies between the RSS and other organizations (predominantly Akalis) increasingly got blurred during the anti Emergency struggle. But still the RSS in its core did not appreciate the terming of the Emergency struggle by their allies, the Akalis, as as '*Dharam Yuddh*'. So the virtual god sent opportunity, as JP movement was for the RSS, allowed it get back in tandem with the *sangathanist* network and integrates it with the legitimate political opposition of other socio-political forces.

The abolition of the Emergency was construed as the victory of its antagonists. This enhanced the legitimacy of the RSS in the newly formed Janta government; though *ab-initio* this coalition was afflicted with ideological complications. Meanwhile, the increased prestige of the *Sangh* helped in increasing its cadre, *pracharak* and *shakha* count in Punjab, as in other parts of India. However, this strengthening of the RSS at once benefited and simultaneously complicated the political unity of the alliance. The increasing RSS clout aroused mixed feelings among other political forces, sometimes bordering on the leanings of clipping the *Sangh's* influence in the newly formed coalition. In Punjab, the Akalis too echoed similar views. So the ever accommodating RSS to the government's diktats and moods, now tried to conceal some of its aggressive features of the Hindu nationalism *e.g.* it's anti minority stance.²¹⁷ This was precisely

217. For the change in the RSS attitude during the J.P. Movement and J.P.'s persuasions to the RSS on different issues, see, Jai Prakash Narayan, *Jail Life-A Collection of Personal Letters*, New Delhi, Arnold Heinemann, 1977, p. 31. However the alliance between J.P. and the RSS testified that J.P.'s Sarvodya and Gandhian philosophy lacked the real radicalism. For details see, R.Fox, "Gandhi in the World System", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, November 25, 1987, pp. 233-247.

applicable in Punjab whose rapidly altering situation was paving the way for extreme Sikh nationalism with its cult of violence.

The RSS by the virtue of its very definition of the *Hindu Rashtra* always man manoeuvred and endeavoured to bring the Sikhs within the broad ambit of *Hindutva* and always denied separate identity to them. But inspite of its strong faith in the unity of the Hindu society, it was critical and wary of separatist tendencies, both of the Akalis and the terrorists. Notwithstanding its limited appeal among the Sikhs, the RSS did some commendable work during the initial phase of the terrorism in Punjab. Besides lending helping hand to the victims of the terrorist violence, it also worked for maintaining the morale of the Punjabi Hindus high who had at one stage started migrating from Punjab. By the virtue or vice of its quasi-military character and fascistic tendencies as alleged by its critics, the RSS adopted remarkably tolerant attitude in Punjab. This nullified the possible fear of the civil war in Punjab, the prospect of which could not be denied when one thinks of the RSS militant background during the partition days.

The role and the character of the RSS were even appreciated by the renowned journalist, novelist and one of the bitter critics of the *Sangh* school of thought, Kushwant Singh. He while addressing the *swayamsevaks* at *Guru Puja Utsav* of the RSS at Madras on August 5, 1984, referred to the yeoman's service rendered by the RSS men during the floods, earthquakes, famines, *etc.* all over the country and said that no body can doubt the patriotic fervor of the RSS and its commitment to the *Akhand Bharat*. He urged them to work for creating amity in Punjab by following the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, Jai Prakash Narayan, Golwalkar and Bala Saheb Deoras. These people, he believed, had given their entire life for the sake of

the country and asked for nothing in return.²¹⁸

But inspite of its professedly true intentions *vis-à-vis* Punjab problem, its thinking and approach towards this issue was distorted by the subjectiveness regarding evaluation and assessment of the reactions in Punjab. Many times its policy of taking the Sikhs along and persuading the extremist ones resulted in their further alienation and aggravation of the fear of assimilation, which had disquieting effect. So there was an apparent gap in the thinking process of the *Sangh* regarding the Punjab problem. At times the leadership was unable to persuade its rank and file to adopt conciliatory approach instead of acting as the representative of the non-Sikh community. Though it adopted nationalistic approach during the anti Sikh riots in Delhi and in the wake of these riots Bala Saheb Deoras while clearing the air said, "we should keep in mind that every Sikh is not an Akali, every Akali is not an extremist and every extremist is not a *Khalistani*." ²¹⁹ This statement was an eye opener for the Hindus and the Sikhs who were increasingly adopting antagonistic postures. The happenings of Punjab and the RSS response towards it could be summed up in the statement of Guru Golwalkar who once said that if a tongue he was bitten by the teeth accidentally, than was it prudent to break our teeth in retaliation?

218. *Organiser*, August 26, 1984.

219. *Sankranti Ka Shubh Sandesh*, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

Chapter : 7

Conclusion

The founding fathers of the RSS perceived that India would not become a strong and liberated nation unless it would be culturally rejuvenated and so the circumstances leading to the birth of the RSS spelt out the parameters of its ideology and course of action. The RSS believed that the *Sangathan* of the Hindu society with strong emphasis on strength, discipline, work and training which would ultimately lead to the formation of a strong *Hindu Rashtra* of yore. These revivalists were of the view that the homogenization of the Hindu society, which had been rendered incapable by the foreign (Christian and Muslim) political and cultural domination was of utmost importance. Even though being a majority community, the RSS's founders believed that the Hindus have been robbed of manliness, vigour and sense of purpose.

The words of Ashis Nandy, proves the case in point. He says, "If metaphors of sexuality can be ascribed to cultures then Hinduism has always been imagined by the aliens as too feminine, effeminate, too diffuse and unmanly. The Europeans even of a friendly type lament the want of manliness in Indian nature and conduct".¹ So Dr. Hedgewar incorporated into RSS, a training process stressing on discipline and commitment to certain ideals, which would ultimately led to the character building. Therefore, under those conditions and through a set process, the RSS started its journey of rediscovering, recognizing and reasserting the Hindu identity, which they felt, had existed since time immemorial.

1. Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, p.9.

Ever since its formation in 1925 at Nagpur and in 1935-36 in Punjab, the RSS drew its support almost exclusively from the urban clusters and predominantly from the middle classes. In Punjab, it did not struggle much for its establishment as its predecessors Arya Samaj, Hindu Sabhas and Sanatan Dharma Sabhas already had a secure base among the urban Hindus. The tailor made *pracharaks* from Maharashtra with their indoctrinated philosophy of *Hindutva* succeeded in gaining a foothold in the Hindu community whose religious beliefs, practices and sense of communal pride had been affected by the changes brought on by modernity and simultaneously by the socio and geo-political factors. As in Nagpur, the Muslim factor in the major cities of Punjab viz. Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Montgomery, Peshawar, Sialkot, Rawalpindi was instrumental in providing the RSS a fertile ground. Hence its rapid spread and ready acceptability among the urban Hindus from the period 1936 to 1947 coincided with the growing tensions between the Hindus and the Muslims. The increasing Hindu vulnerability made the RSS more attractive to them who looked at it as a man force (though with *lathis* and minor weapons) providing self defence techniques with aggressive masculinity.

It was true to some extent that the individuals got attracted towards the Sangh not for its ideology but for its outward cultural features and mannerisms. The regular *shakha* activity, uniform, strict discipline and the training from the ascetic like *pracharaks* enticed young Punjabi Hindus and to some extent the Sikhs towards initiation and thus forging a brotherhood. Even at times the RSS was able to attract men from the lower classes also who construed it an agency towards increased respectability and assertiveness in the Punjabi society. Moreover in those times i.e. pre-partition era, the communal solidarity was given preference over the caste solidarity and therefore some assertive and proactive people

with Hindu bent of mind carved their place in the organisation. But after independence willy-nilly, RSS due to the prevailing circumstances suffered from attrition as also by the other upcoming movements like, Dalit and Akali. This eroded some of its lower caste base, which was already very humble due to *brahmin-bania* domination. In spite of that the recruiting principles were not diluted in favour of increasing bench strength. The norms were stringent and many times its members due to the rigours of the *Sangh's* life deserted it in between. But then the RSS was never meant to mobilize on a mass scale. In Dr. Hedgewar's scheme of things only one to three percent of the Hindu men were required to initiate the cultural revolution. The same criteria and methodology was applied in Punjab where out of millions it attracted few thousands of the rejuvenated men to its fold facilitated by the increasingly vicious atmosphere of communal enmity with real threats of the partition.

The RSS defence of the Hindus in the partition holocaust and the subsequent refugee relief operations earned it considerable respect and popularity. Therefore, it started adopting increasingly activist approach in its repertoire of programmes. This activism, however, was cut short by the ban placed on it in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination. The RSS came out clean, though not unscathed after the ban. Due to the mounting pressure from its cadres it started dabbling in the politics to safeguard its interests from the whims of the government. Golwalkar at the helm of affairs during this time incessantly emphasized on cultural nationalism but could not avoid RSS's imminent political adventurism by lending Mookerjee his trained cadres to provide skeleton to his newly formed Jana Sangh. Punjab was the birthplace of the new party whose migrant Hindu urbanites provided it with ready made constituency.

The USP of Jana Sangh proved its undoing. In spite of the historical role played by it in the Praja Parishad movement and Mookerjee's inclination to develop it on the moderate lines, it failed to transcend the limitations of its origin. After the death of Mookerjee the RSS trained leaders took the control of the Jana Sangh and developed it on aggressive nationalistic lines. In Punjab, the Jana Sangh found it hard to attract substantial Hindu population and thus electorally failed to convert votes polled in its favour to the seats won. The secular ethos of the Nehruvian Congress and the aggressive assertion of the Sikh nationalism by the Akalis proved major hurdles in its expansion besides its own Hindu chauvinism. So on different occasions, Jana Sangh's cautious approach towards Hindu nationalist cause in Punjab (Hindi language, *Maha Punjab*) led to its taking a political stand, on which it found itself in exposed position lacking public support. Its parent body the RSS too was caught in linguistic quagmire where the local leaders and the grass root cadres openly sided with the Arya Jana Sanghis and other Hindi protagonists. Though the situation was eased with the intervention of central leadership. Golwalkar and Madhok's appeal to the state leadership and local cadres to accept realities produced results when in the reorganized Punjab the Hindu and Sikh nationalists jointly contested elections against the Congress. However, during all this commotion of Hindi-Punjabi and Punjabi *Suba - Maha Punjab*, the Hindu nationalist failed to arouse anything resembling a mass mobilization of the Hindus to assert their territorial and linguistic claims.

The RSS network in Punjab continued to grow steadily in the decade of 1950 and 1960 though not without dwindling ranks and hiccups on certain junctures. During, these years, it came across many opportunities by means of which it increased its clout among the populace. The Punjabi *Suba* movement left them in bad taste but the

cow protection movement, Indo-China and Indo-Pak wars increased its credibility that even Nehru gave his assent to their participation in the Republic Day parade in the aftermath of Indo-China war of 1962, in 1963. Side by side, the Punjab RSS started using this much-awaited credibility since its erosion due to Gandhi's murder to its advantage by increasing its thrust towards the rural, Sikh dominated areas. This was further facilitated by the forging of pragmatic alliances by the Jana Sangh with the Akalis resulting into the formation of the first non-congress ministry in 1967. However, the all pervasive influence of the RSS cadres at the local level kept control over the party and thus prevented the dilution of Jana Sangh's Hindu nationalist identity. There is a fine line between the communalism and the nationalism and the Jana Sangh as a political party and the RSS as a Hindu nationalist organisation appeared to straddle that line during those times.

In 1970s the dynamics of Punjab were heading towards an anarchy, which it witnessed in the decade of 1980. The Sikh separatism which had its genesis in beginning of the twentieth century after independence, first manifested in the shape of Punjabi language and Punjabi *Suba*, which had already been achieved in 1960s to Anandpur Sahib Resolution and ultimately to terrorism. The RSS's response was cautious and calculated. In principle it is and was, always against separatist tendencies. Golwalkar was the champion of unitary form of government and never favoured divisions. He even pondered on the possibilities of reclaiming the lost lands of *Bharat* (*i.e.* Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Burma, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka *etc.*). But owing to its own conception of the word Hindu that also included the Sikhs, the RSS diluted its rigid stand. However, it did not want to see a weak centre, which according to it was essential for preserving the fabric of India. So it was not without a reason when the RSS lauded Indira Gandhi of her firmness in tackling Pakistan. This was a

veiled indicator of the feelings that the RSS harboured towards separatist tendencies of the Akalis, which it viewed, camouflaged as *panthic* demands.

The Emergency experience of 1975 provided the RSS with an opportunity to work with ideologically different political forces. The *sangathanist* techniques and the political activism again gained importance with the appointment of Bala Saheb Deoras as *sarsanghchalak* after Guru Golwalkar. In the J.P. movement the RSS's trained activists acquired a new prestige and legitimacy when by the employment of the Gandhian techniques it successfully resisted the government's onslaught. In Punjab its joint working with the Akalis helped both to cultivate stronger bonds and understand each other's attitude *vis-à-vis* the common issues afflicting Punjab. The struggle waged by the RSS during the Emergency got translated in its surging membership quickly after the revocation of the Emergency and the forging of the Janta alliance. This was RSS's first tryst with the political power at the central level though not without contradictions and problems.

The RSS since its inception in Punjab treated Sikhs as the part and parcel of the Hindu nation. By the virtue of the very definition of term Hindu they always manoeuvred and endeavoured to bring the Sikhs within the broad ambit of *Hindutva*. So it always denied separate identity to the Sikhs. This idea, however, was met with serious opposition from the Sikh community, particularly the orthodox and extremist ones. Similarly, the bogey of identity crisis often raised by the Sikh leadership was equally chagrined by the RSS who believed that the Hindu *dharma* is vast enough to accommodate the independent existence of its sub-sects. Sangh even felt that the Hinduism has been more comfortable with the Sikhism *vis-à-vis* other Indian religions because it had been founded for the protection of the

mother society. But inspite of this brotherly rhetoric, the RSS's appeal remained confined to the section of Hindus and few liberal Sikhs to the militant ones the RSS was an anathema another need to be tackled sooner than later.

But inspite of its limited appeal the RSS did some useful work in mitigating the miseries of the Hindu populace who at one stage had started migrating from Punjab in wake of militant's assault. Besides lending the Punjabi Hindus and Sikh victims of the terrorism a helping hand, the RSS also boosted their morale by forming *suraksha samitis* in various parts of Punjab. The remarkably tolerant attitude adopted by it even in the wake of grave provocations (killing of its *swayamsevaks*, attacks on its *shakhas* at Ludhiana and Moga) proved RSS's stance *vis-à-vis* Sikhs who were often overtly described by them as 'misguided brothers'. Theirs this attitude even continued during the anti-Sikh riots in the wake of Indira Gandhi's killing where they came in the aid of victims. However at grass root, level the *Sangh* could not refrain its work from conceiving ill feelings towards the Sikh separatism and who often adopted offensive stances *vis-à-vis* extremists.

To sum up the RSS approach towards the terrorism we can say that inspite of professedly true intentions *vis-à-vis* Punjab problem, its thinking and approach towards the issue was distorted by subjective ness regarding evaluation and assessment of the reactions in Punjab. Many times its policy of taking the Sikhs along and persuading the extremists ones resulted in their further alienation and aggravation of their fear of assimilation. So there was an apparent gap in the thinking process of the *Sangh* regarding the Punjab problem. The *Sangh* school of thought during this troubled time at best adopted preservationist tactics and was not in the full command of the situation. Their efforts to diffuse the tensions between the non-Sikhs

and the Sikhs had a limited impact and that too was constrained with limitations.

My view of the history of the Hindu nationalist movement in Punjab under the RSS explain the issues involved and strategies adopted by its proponents and how far they got success in implementing those their efforts to provide a platform for the militant Hindu offensive against the Muslims in Punjab during the early phase of its history were quite successful. But during the later period, especially after 1966, its efforts of the homogenization of the Punjabi society increasingly met with serious opposition and therefore boomeranged. But wisely enough, this organisation attuned itself to the practical realities and through its agency of affiliates successfully forged alliance with the dominant political creed of Punjab i.e. Akalis. When the RSS says, that is a cultural organisation it actually means varied facets of culture of which politics too is an inalienable feature. So in Punjab also it is enmeshed in politics though not at a larger scale as in other states of Indian where society and demography suits it.

The charge of communalism and riot mongering which is repeatedly clamped on the RSS was largely unfound in Punjab. Though there are the instances when it indulged in violence and agitations against other communities, but that was largely during the pre independence times when the situation commanded and demanded such actions. In case of the Sikhs, RSS's agenda always remained to garner their support and cultivate brotherly oneness in pursuance of their goal of united Hindudom. Still, these attempts of theirs to win over or subordinate the minority identity has not been proved very successful. Simultaneously, the charge of spreading hatred is also not vehement. However, the future of the RSS and its *parivar* in Punjab lies in the rearticulating of its ideology and the strategies for that rearticulation converting all the regions of India into a uniform Hindu

Rashtra may not be possible in near future and more so in Punjab where it has all the possible disadvantages. Even during the peak of terrorism in 1984, it remained a marginal force in Punjab i.e. the time period where my study closes. But it was still endeavouring hard to regain, its old charm and clout and therefore was trying its best to reclaim the confidence of the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab in furtherance of its goal of 'modified and globalized Hindutva.

Appendix-I

Some of the issues which were discussed in the third year OTC at Nagpur in 2005 were as follows :-

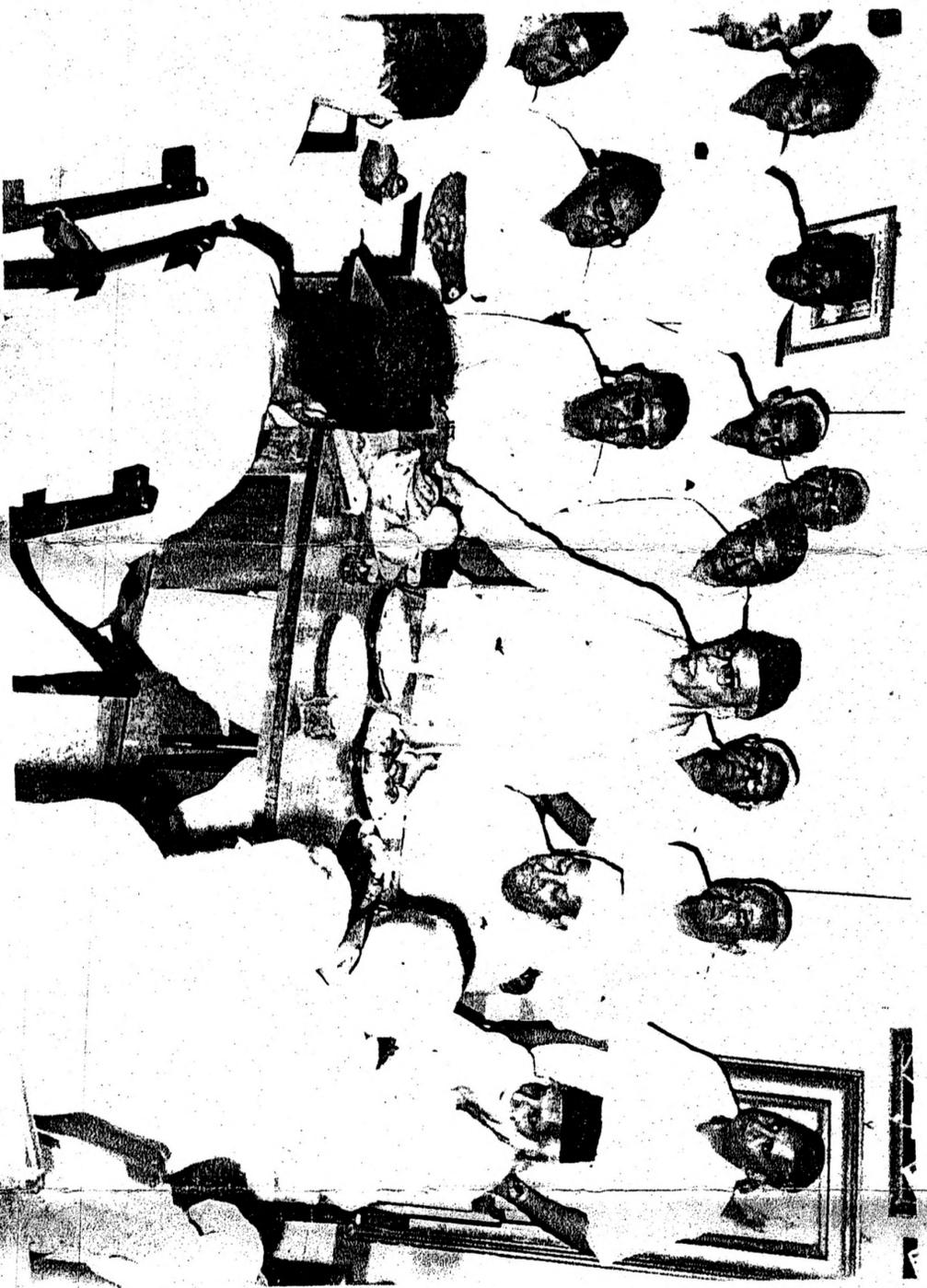
1. The aim of third year OTC and the expectations from the *swayamsevaks*.
2. Role of *shakhas* in the man making.
3. Role of women power (*Matrushakti*).
4. Hindu economic thoughts (*Hindu artha chintan*).
5. Sri Guruji.
6. Hindu view of social service (*Seva Hindu drishtikon*)
7. Role of *swayamsevak* family in the social transformation (*Samaj parivartan mein swayamsevak parivar ki bhumika*).
8. *Hindutva* versus Semitic religions (*Hindutva banam Semitic mazhab*).
9. *Dharma Rajya* and theocratic state. (*Dharam rajya avam panthic rajya*.)
10. Contribution of India to the world in the field of scientific knowledge. (*Gyan vigyan ke kshetra mein Bharat ki vishwa ko dein*).
11. Role of prayers and oath in the formation of a devoted worker. (*Dhayanisht karakarta ke nirman mein pratigya aur prathana ki bhumika*).
12. Discipline of life (*Jeevan ka anushasan*).
13. Introduction of Hindu religion (*Hindu dharam parichay*).
14. Role of *Sangh* in the formation of 'Great Hindu Power'. (*Vishal hindu shakti ke nirman mein Sangh ki bhumika*).

15. Ever revered Doctor ji (*Param pujniya Doctor ji*).
16. National viewpoint of history. (*Itihas ki aur dekhne ka rashtriya drishtikon*).
17. Role of *swayamsevak* in the present poisonous climate (read social and political) (*Vartman vishakt vayumandal mein swayamsevak ki bhumika*).
18. Salient features of the Hindu culture (*Hindu sanskriti ki visheshtiayn*).
19. Social harmony (*Samajik samrasta*).
20. Discovery of *Hindutva* in tribals. (*Janjation mein Hindutva ka avishkar*).
21. Human communication, Human values and Human arrangement. (*Lok sampark, lok sanskar, lok vayvastha*).
22. Problem of conversions and religious awakening. (*Matantaran ki samasya aur dharamjagran*).
23. The discipline of *Sangh* work. (*Sangh karya padhati*).
24. Indian Constitution Part I & II (*Bhartiya samvidhan bhag I aur II*).
25. The concept of Nation. (*Rashtra ki avdharna*).
26. Organization moves on.... (*Sanghathan ghade chalo ...*)
27. *Sangh* is not an institution but the invention of progressive *Hindutva* (*Sangh sanstha nahin, Hindutva ka vikasman avishkar*).

Appendix-II



जथेदारजी शाल भेटं करते हर...
सभाध्यक्ष ज.मोहन सिंह तुडने मा.
बाला सा.को शाल भेटं किया ।



दुर्याना तीर्थ प्रबंध समितिके स्थापनकार्यक्रम
प्रसिद्ध तीर्थ दुर्याना मन्दिर की प्रबन्ध समिति (अमृतसर)
ने माननीय बाला साहब के सम्मान में जलपान का
कार्यक्रम आयोजित किया - आभार प्रदर्शन
करते हुए । 18.4.77.



SCENE OF A CAMP STARTED FOR THE
 HELP OF THE SOLDIERS BY THE LUDHIANA
 BRANCH OF R.S.S. DURING INDO-PAK WAR-1971





॥

पुष्पमाला अर्पण करते हुए भगत जी...

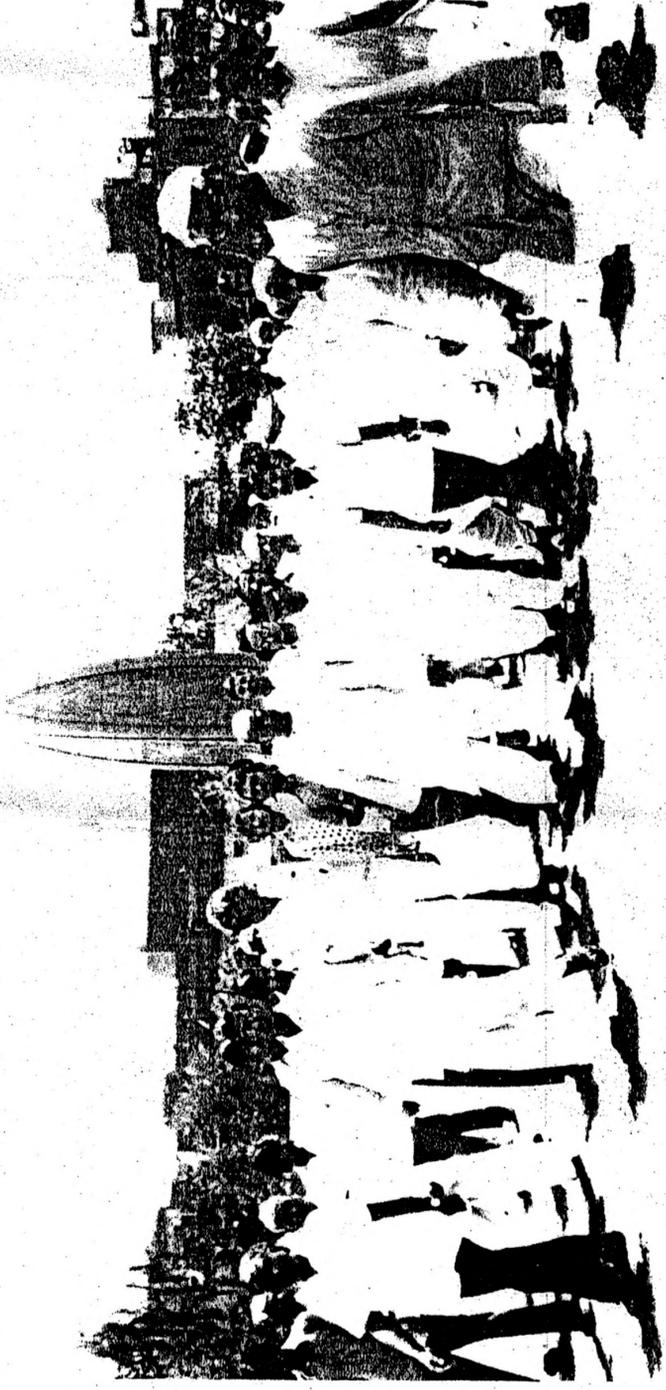
पिंजालवाड़ा अभुतसर के संस्थापक भगत पूर्ण सिंह जीरेलवे स्टेशन अभुतसर के बाहिर मंच पर मा. बाला साहब देवरसका स्वागत करते हुए.

15-4-77



सभास्थल, गोलबाग में प्रवेश समय ---

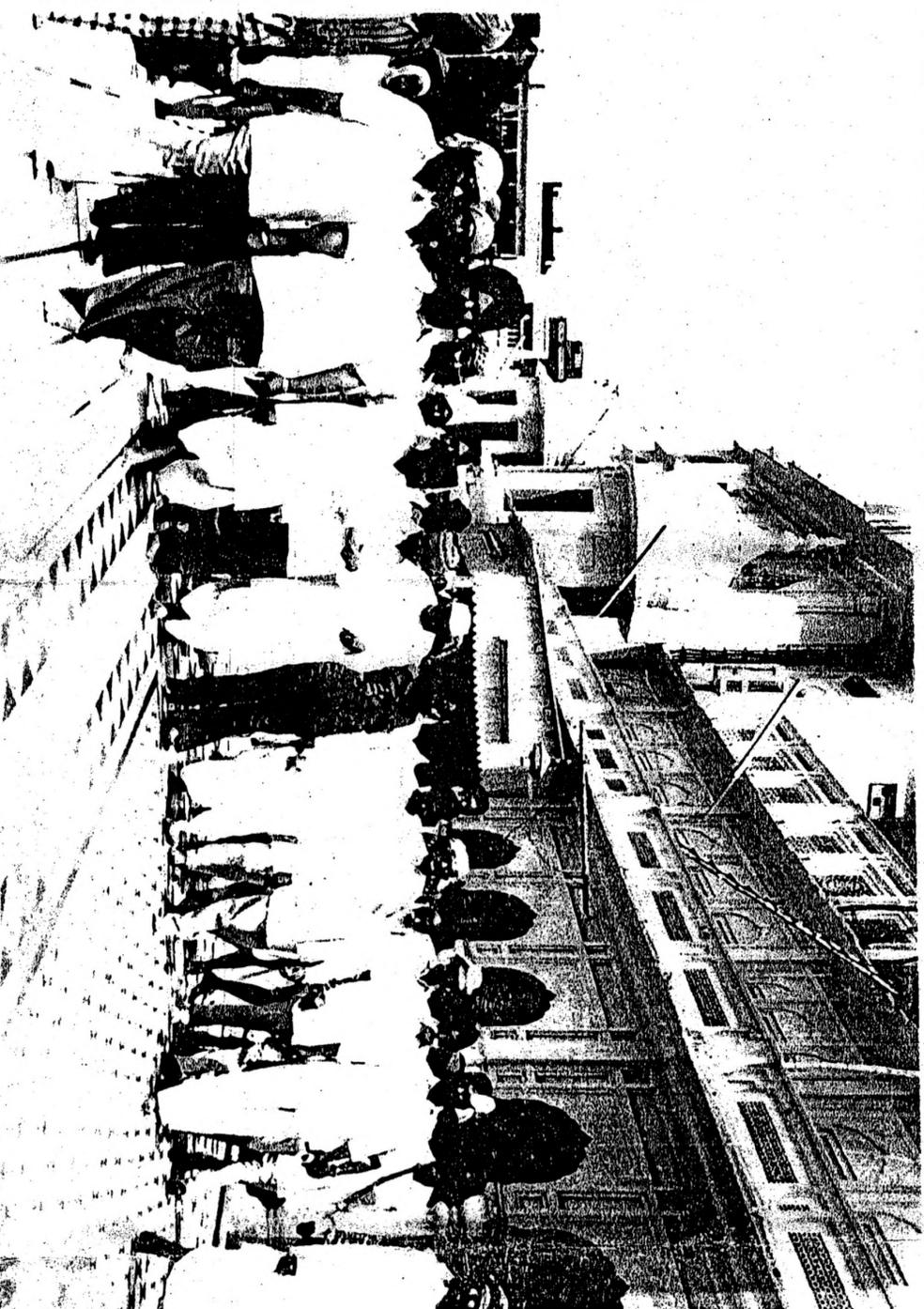
साथ में श्री मित्रसेनजी, ला. लाजपतरायजी, ला. जगतनारायण
जी, मा. माधवरावजी मूले, जलथेदार मोहनसिंहजी तुड़,
स्वयं मा. बालासा. डा. थडैजी, मा. मोधेजी, बा. दिलीपचंदजी गुप्त,
एवं श्रीमान् जितेन्द्रवीरजी सुप्त. 15.4.77 सायं.



जलियांवाला बाग से बाहिर आते हुए ---

अमृतसर-जलियांवालाबाग में शहीदों को श्रद्धांजली अर्पण करने के बाद बाहिर आते हुए. अनेक कार्यकर्ताओं एवं अधिकारियों सहित बाहिर आते हुए मा. बालासाहब

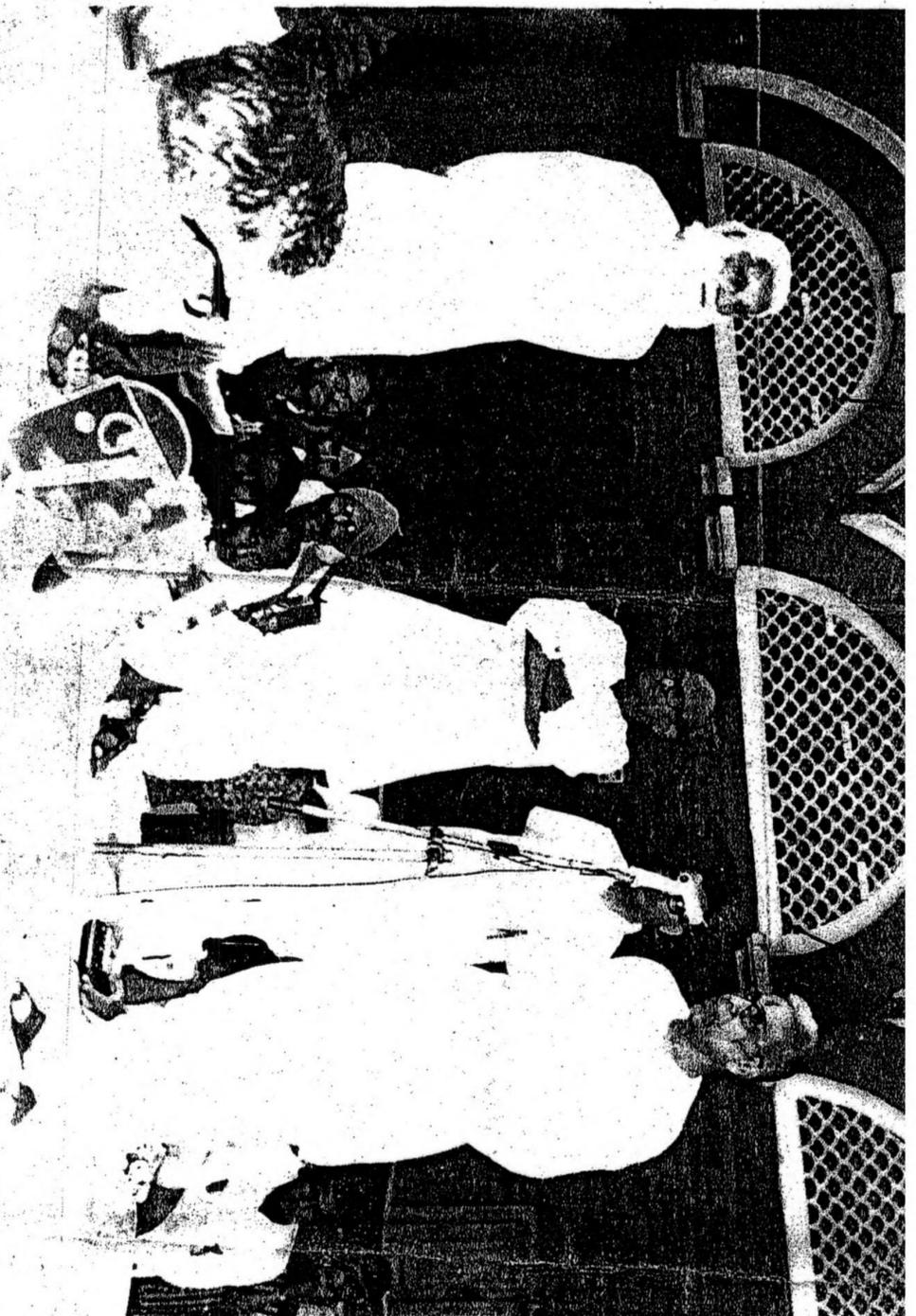
16.4.77.



27

शिरोमणी गुरुद्वारा प्रबन्धक कमेटी की ओरसे सरोपा भेंट.

भा. बालासा. पांजाब के प्रमुख तीर्थस्थान स्वर्णमन्दिर [दरबार साहिब],
अमृतसर में दर्शनाथ गयेगोकमेटी के सदस्यों ने भावभीना स्वागत किया,
“सरोपा” भेंट किया तत्पश्चात् मन्दिरकी परिक्रमा करते हुए. 16.4.77.



12

स्वागत कर्तव्यों को मार्गदर्शन -----

रेलवेस्टेशन, अमृतसर के बाहिर बने स्वागती मंच
सेस्वयंसेवकों और स्वागत करने आयोहजारी नागरिकों
का मार्गदर्शनकरती हुए मा.बाला साहब .15.4.77

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Bedi, Harmahender Singh, Hindi professor and former dean Faculty of Languages, GNDU, Amritsar, in September 26, 2005.

Brijmohan, RSS office incharge, at Amritsar, on August 12, 2007.

Chopra, Goverdhan Lal, former RSS *swayamsevak* and an activist, at Amritsar, on August 12, 2007.

Chopra, Goverdhan, a former *swayamsevak* and a septuagenarian, at Amritsar, on August 12, 2007.

Dinanath, a veteran RSS *swayamsevak* at Ferozepur, on March 23, 2007.

Gill, Tarlochan Singh, president BJP unit Moga, at Moga, on September 2, 2007.

Gupta, D.P., former Punjab *prant karyavaha*, at Moga, on September 2, 2007.

Gupta, Vijay, former *pracharak* of Abohar and Fazilka, at Moga, on September 2, 2007.

Jitender, Incharge of the archives at the RSS head office Amritsar, on January 5, 2008.

Kaka, Satpal, (also called as living library in the RSS circles of Punjab), at Amritsar, on November 22, 2004.

Kalia, Om Prakash, a veteran RSS functionary at the RSS head office, Amritsar, on August 12, 2007.

Lal, Kashmiri, former Punjab *prant pracharak*, at Amritsar, on February 25, 2006.

Mahajan, Janak Raj, former RSS *sanghchalak* of Pathankot, at Pathankot, on December 26, 2004.

Mahajan, Mulkh Raj, at Narot Jaimal Singh (Gurdaspur), on June 15, 2005.

Mehta, Yash Pal, retired vice-principal, Government College, Talwara (Hoshiarpur) and head of Vidya Bharti Punjab, at Pathankot, on December 28, 2007.

Mohanlal, Master, Transport Minister in Government of Punjab, at Pathankot, on August 19, 2007.

Namdhari, Swatantar Pal Singh, a member of Rashtriya Sikh Sangat and Himalaya Parivar, at New Delhi, on October 3, 2007.

Oke, Milind, Incharge of the archives at the RSS head office, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, on October 3, 2007.

Prabhakar, Ashok, former Punjab *prant pracharak*, at RSS head office, Keshav Kunj, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, on October 3, 2006.

Rakesh, *pracharak* of Jammu and Kashmir RSS, at Jammu, on August 20, 2005.

Rameshwar, Punjab *prant pracharak*, at Amritsar, on January 5, 2008.

Sab, Chajju Ram, an ex-Jana Sangh MLA from Pathankot, at Pathankot, on December 28, 2007.

Satpal, Babu, former RSS *swayamsevak*, at Sujanpur on May 23, 2007.

Satyadev, former Jana Sangh leader, at Ferozepur, on March 23, 2007.

Sharma, Balvir, (only person alive in Punjab who has seen Dr. Hedgewar and had the opportunity of working with him, he remained *pracharak* of Montgomery and Multan (now in Pakistan) during pre-Partition days), at Jalandhar, on February 28, 2006.

Singh, Balwant, retired Physics lecturer from D.A.V. College Jalandhar and an RSS activist, at Jalandhar, on September 2, 2006.

Singh, Balwinder, witness of anti-Sikh riots of 1984, at Mukerian, on March 15, 2007.

Singh, Chiranjiv, former president Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, at New Delhi, on October 4, 2007.

Singh, Mukhtiar, victim of anti Sikh riot of 1984 who fled Delhi and came back to his native place Narot Jaimal Singh (Gurdaspur), at Narot Jaimal Singh, on June 20, 2008.

Singh, Ram, former incharge of Punjab *prant* and former head of Bharitya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, New Delhi, at RSS head office, Keshav Kunj, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, on October 25, 2006 and October 3, 2007.

Talwar, Ashok, an ex-chairman Khadi Board and ex-district BJP president of Moga, at Moga, on September 2, 2007.

Virmani, Madan Lal, former RSS boudhik pramukh of the Punjab RSS and headed its intellectual branch and also former editor of Pathik Sandesh and incharge of Vishwa Samvad Kendra, at Jalandhar, on February, 28, 2006.

Vishwanath, former Punjab *prant pracharak*, at Amritsar, on September 10, 2006.

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