

Gandhi – Sikh Relationship

Commentary # 5

Founding of Disastrous Unrelenting Sikh Polity

We are jumping into an uncharted territory. The infamous “Gurdwara Reform Movement” had hijacked the Sikhs into believing of their glorious past and believing success in their nonviolent activism of 1920-1925, leading to liberating various historical Gurdwaras from the clutches of unsavory controls, be it *mahants* or appointees of the British colonial government.

To date the Sikh “history” of early 1920s has not been subjected to rigorous inquiry. Hopefully we shall endeavor to dig into that past within the constraints of available documents and reconstructing the past events to the best of our abilities.

Let’s jump ahead by a few decades to the times of Darshan Singh Pheruman (1885-1969). We are thankful to highly reputable Sardar Kapur Singh

(1909-1986) who in his book *"The True Story: The State of the Sikhs before and after partition"*

(English edition, photo attached at the end) added the Will (dated August 1, 1969) of Mr. Pheruman in Annexure ix. This was written about three months before his death. Please read it carefully:

"I, Darshan Singh Pheruman, want to convey this last message to the Panth and my countrymen, and all the good people of the world. When this message reaches you I will have departed from this world.

Today, on August 1, 1969, I have lived 85 years of my life. For the last half a century I have worked through sufferings and tribulations for the freedom of my country and for ensuring ever increasing ascendance and expansion of the Panth.

The country is now free but the Panth is still in bondage. In the country corruption and moral degradation have vastly increased. The management of the Sikh Gurdwaras and the conduct of Sikh politics have fallen into the hands of hypocrites, styling themselves pious men and saints and those who did not wish the Panth well. The doctrines of the Sikh religion, the traditions of the Sikh religion, the traditions of the Khalsa, the historical splendour of the Sikh Nation had been thus trampled under the feet of these undesirable persons.

Those who had played up the drama of undertaking solemn vows before the Akal Takhat to immolate

themselves have, by taking recourse to lies and cowardice, captured the decision-making centres of power.

The traitors of the Panth and the pious frauds, called sants, have successfully hatched an ugly conspiracy to eliminate every vestige of the wholesome influence of Sikh religion from Sikh politics with the purpose of making Sikh people slaves of others.

This grave sin can be washed away only through a genuine and pure martyrdom. The ugly and audacious memorials which Sant Fateh Singh has got constructed, as rivals of the holy Akal Takhat, are calling loudly for genuine sacrifices from the Singhs.

To achieve this end, I am going to lay down my life.

It is my appeal to the Sikhs that they recognise their duty after I am gone. My body should be cremated in the agni-kund made for Sant Fateh Singh and my ashes should be sent to Kiratpur. The traitors should be given the treatment they deserve and the agni-kunds made in Akal Takht should be destroyed as they are against the tenets of Sikhism and a blot on the bright countenance of the Panth.

Please pray that our tenth master accepts my sacrifice and showers his blessings on the Panth.

Long live sampuran Punjab!

Long live the Sikh Homeland!

Waheguru ji ka khalsa waheguru ji ki fateh!

Servant of the Sikh sangat

Darshan Singh Pheruman”

Martyred Pheruman sounded the red alarm on Sant Fateh Singh (1911-1972) who led the Shromani Akali Dal Party during the crucial 1960s time of Punjabi Suba Movement with lightning rod on the Chandigarh issue. Fateh Singh held a power knob on SGPC and built an inappropriate structure on top of the Akal Takht for his politically inspired self-immolation. This sorry state of both SGPC and Akali Dal were obvious to Pheruman.

Looking back even more, ironically, Pheruman in his younger years was a veteran of the “Gurdwara Reform Movement” and quite surprisingly he joined the Congress Party instead of Akali Dal or its mother ship, SGPC.

Why?

It's quite possible that young Pheruman smelled the rat and stayed away from the SGPC-Akali Dal complex.

Sardar Kapur Singh in the above-mentioned book has also alerted us that during the 1930s the Akali Dal leaders (including Master Tara Singh) made sure not to let any educated or intelligent person join its ranks.

Why?

One must wonder and question both the SGPC & Akali Dal organizations. Is there something unique to its genesis leading to the start of the “Gurdwara Reform Movement”? Also, one must wonder if SGPC-Akali Dal complex had any links with Mahatma Gandhi! In addition, we must ponder whether “Gurdwara Reform Movement” was a subservient extension of Gandhi’s 2nd nationwide multi-headed Satyagraha movement set against the British authorities? Or put simply, was “Gurdwara Reform Movement” setup to create an unrepairable gulf between the Sikhs and the British authorities—in favor of the Gandhi led Congress Party? These are difficult questions that Sikhs of today must ask, must investigate, and must spread the findings to educate other Sikhs.

The year 1919 is crucial to study and evaluate M.K. Gandhi's impact on Punjab in general and Sikh politics in particular. In earlier commentary #3, we have already addressed Gandhi's visit to Golden Temple on November 4, 1919. But there is much more to dig deeper and wider while recognizing one fact that Sikhs have remained negligent in recording their history accurately of early 1920s. However, Gandhi's own writings help us somewhat to fill in the large gaps.

In 1919, Gandhi spent inordinate time traveling to various parts of Punjab. One can expect him to spend time in Lahore, it being the capital city of Punjab then. To him Punjab's importance was "Being situated in the north, the Punjab is like the crown of India."

1. Writing about his travelogue on November 11, 1919, in *Navajivan* (his Gujarati newspaper), Gandhi wrote of visiting Gujranwala:

"Last week I visited Gujranwala. It is a township with a population of 30,000. There also I found the same love as

in Amritsar. As I had to examine the evidence there, I had taken Mr. Purushotamdas Tandon and Dr. Parasaram with me. We stayed at the house of Divan Mangalsen, who is at present in jail. I had, therefore, the privilege of meeting his wife and was indebted to her for her hospitality. In Lahore, I am the guest of Smt. Sarladevi Choudhrani and have been bathing in her deep affection. I had first met Sarladevi in 1901. She comes from the famous Tagore family. Of her learning and sincerity, too, I get evidence in ever so many ways. In Amritsar, I also met the wives of Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. All these ladies bear their sorrow with great fortitude.

Two large meetings were held in Gujranwala—one for women, the other for men. I explained the philosophy of the spinning-wheel to the women and they, in their turn, promised to take up spinning.

Gujranwala is the birthplace of Ranjit Singh. I saw the house in which he was born and in which he lived. I drew the people's attention to the extensive damage done to this place. I observe that I meet with no difficulty in consequence of my pointing out to people their lapses at every place. All acknowledge the fact that they have made mistakes. In Gujranwala the officers stopped at nothing by way of revenge and cruelty. It is not necessary to describe these."

What is important missing from the above narrative? Gandhi willfully failed to elaborate what sort of meeting he held for men. Were Sikhs

involved? What was his real purpose of visiting Gujranwala?

[Gandhi was in Gujranwala on November 20 and 21, 1919]

2. Writing in *Navajivan* on December 14, 1919, Gandhi described his visit to Sheikhupura as:

“Having stayed 36 hours in Lahore, we proceeded to Sheikhupura, from where I am writing this letter. This is a tiny village 25 miles from Lahore. Here too, the position is the same as that at Sangla Hill. The people are innocent. Gujranwala and the other villages I have mentioned are all in the same district and, therefore, under one administrative officer, who, it seems, knows no difference between justice and injustice. Consequently, Sheikhupura is in the same plight as Akalgarh and other villages, having had to suffer the same repression.”

Why would Gandhi go to Sheikhupura, a tiny village? He does not elaborate whom he met there. Did he visit Gurdwara Sacha Sauda, located in Farooqabad, just a few miles away from Sheikhupura? Did Gandhi visit Nanakana Sahib village & Gurdwara, again, located not too far

away from the geographical area he was traveling in? We don't know for sure.

[Gandhi was in Sheikhupura on December 5 and 6, 1919)

3. Writing in *Navajivan* on December 21, 1919, Gandhi described his visit from Chuharkana as:

“I wrote my last letter from Sheikhupura. This town was built by the Emperor Jehangir and has a fort and a large temple. They are said to be worth a visit though, of course, I did not have the time to go there. It is said that the Golden Temple at Amritsar is a copy of this one, and smaller....”

We believe that Gandhi is hinting at what is today called “Hiran Minar Park.” The author of this commentary visited that place in 2024 and can say categorically the misleading information that Gandhi was proclaiming to his Gujarati speaking readers.

4. Continuing in *Navajivan* on December 21, 1919, Gandhi described his visit to Lyallpur as:

“I shall now revert to Chuharkana. From there we went to Lyallpur. This is a separate district and is one of the five where Martial Law had been proclaimed. The district takes its name from Lyallpur, which is quite a new town named after Sir Charles Lyall. The town came into being in 1896. There is a clock tower at the center of the city, set in large circle from which eight roads fan out. Houses and shops have been built along them. We can see that all these have been newly built. This is the place known as the main canal colony. The finest wheat and cotton crops grow in this canal area and the people are fairly prosperous. Lyallpur has a population of about 30,000. During the Martial Law, hell had been let loose here. The people had done no harm whatsoever, yet many prominent persons were arrested and unnecessarily harassed. Here also there was a huge meeting. There was a separate meeting for women and, although the men’s meeting was held far from the town, women were present in large numbers. The arrangements at Lyallpur were comparatively good. Wherever the people have received even a little training, the effects are immediately apparent. I have been informed that the spinning programme can succeed very well in the Lyallpur area.”

From the above narrative, one can never be sure as to what Gandhi was doing in Lyallpur. Whom did he meet there? Why was the meeting for men held outside far away from Lyallpur? For what purpose? How many Sikhs attended? Were Sikhs handpicked from this meeting who were to be the vanguard of the “Gurdwara Reform Movement” beginning the upcoming next year of 1920 and onwards?

[Gandhi was in Lyallpur (today it is called Faisalabad in Pakistan) on December 7, 8, 9, 1919]

5. Continuing in *Navajivan* on December 28, 1919, Gandhi described his visit to Jallianwala Bagh. Accompanied by Pandit Madan Mohan Malavia and Mr. Neviile, Gandhi visited Khalsa College and then proceeded to:

“We went on to Jallianwala Bagh. The name Bagh is a misnomer. Jallianwala is a surname and belonged to the original owner of the Bagh. The Bagh is now the property of about 40 people. It is not a garden but a rubbish dump. It is flanked on all sides by the backs of homes and people throw refuse on to it from their rear windows.”

6. Narrating further on what General Dyer did to the Bagh, Gandhi continues:

“There flowed in this Bagh a river of blood, the holy blood of innocent people. Because of this the spot has become sanctified. Efforts are being made to obtain this spot for the nation. It will, indeed, be a matter of shame for us if we do not succeed.”

From thereon, Gandhi and the Congress Party got ready for the upcoming annual session of the Indian National Congress to be held in Amritsar—already discussed in Commentary #4.

Before we close this Commentary #5, let it be clear of what transpired on December 29, 1919: **Central Sikh League** was formed in Amritsar.

Central Sikh League

Abbreviation CSL

<u>Leader</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gajjan Singh • Baba Kharak Singh • Tara Singh
Founder	Sardul Singh Kavishar , Harchand Singh Lyallpuri and Sunder Singh Lyallpuri
Founded	29 December 1919
Dissolved	16 October 1933

Does the founding of the Central Sikh League have any connection with Gandhi's visit to Lyallpur about twenty days before its birth? And this founding of a Sikh political organization may not have been a mere coincidence that it sprang forth right in the middle of the ongoing week marking the commencement of the annual session of the Congress Party in Amritsar!

It's been reported that in 1920 the Sikh League passed a resolution to support the Non-Cooperation Movement started by M.K. Gandhi. Central Sikh League also encouraged volunteers to carry on fight for *Swaraj* (meaning independence). In other words, Sikhs were sucked into Gandhi's Satyagraha campaign getting ready to commence in 1920. Sikh version of Satyagraha under Gandhi's leadership will get going in 1920 and there upon

various Gurdwaras will get caught up in the upcoming new face of deadly Sikh politics.

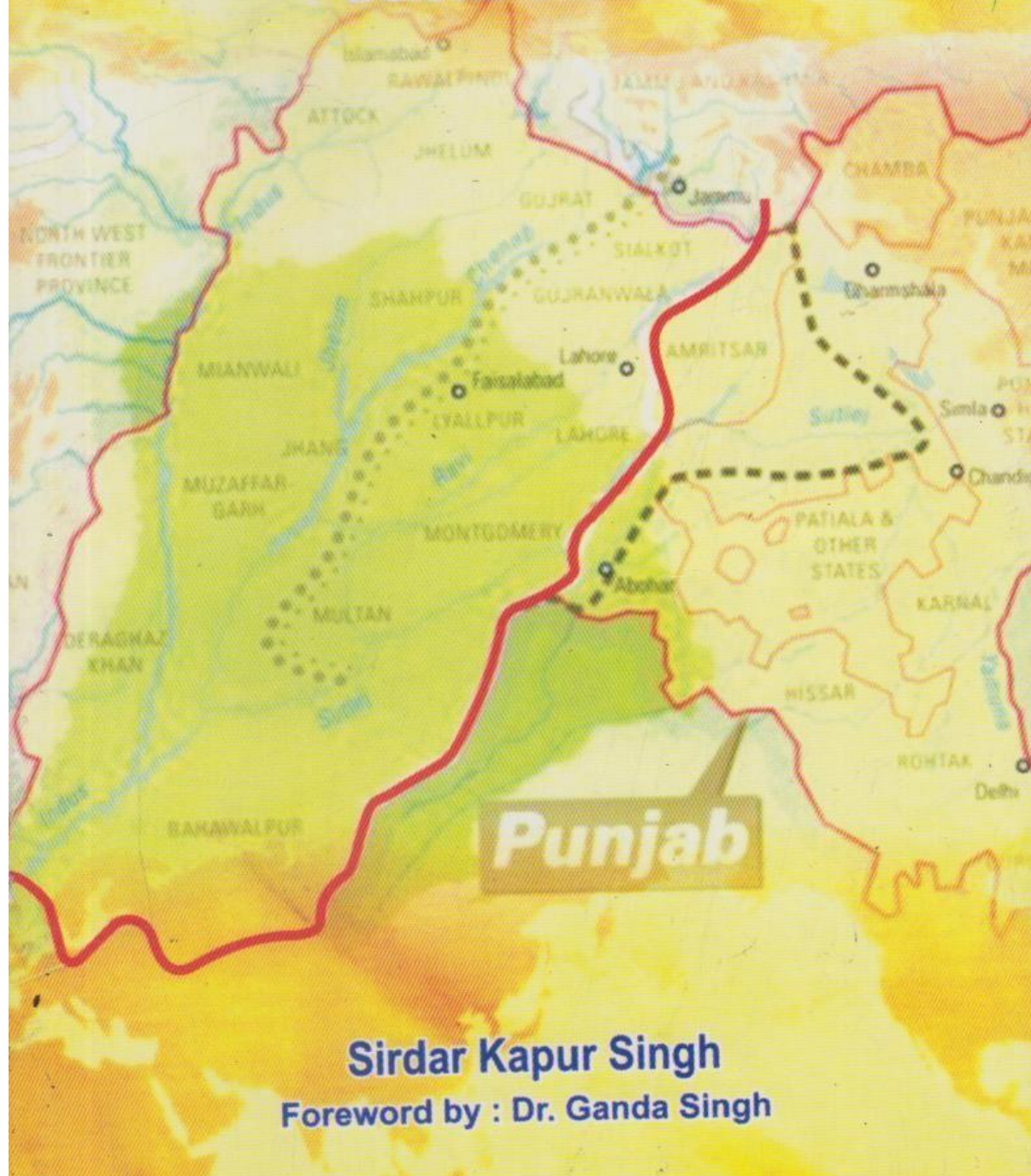
Stay tuned.

P.S. Mahatma Gandhi's writings are picked up from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi

The True Story

The State of the Sikhs before
and after partition

Sachi Sakhi



Sirdar Kapur Singh

Foreword by : Dr. Ganda Singh