

Punjab Crisis

1. Sikh Gurus fought Mughals for establishing a Sikh State in and around Anantapur and later Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1801-39) setup a powerful Sikh State which was annexed in 1849 by British after 2nd Anglo Sikh War.
2. **Akali Movement 1920-25:** for getting control of Gurudwaras from Udasi Sikh Mahants to representatives of people. After this movement Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) came to exist as a party with focus on Sikhism.
3. Post independence there was demand for Punjab as Sikh majority state within India via **Punjabi Suba Civil Movement** until 1966 led by Akali Dal. E.g. Master Tara Singh, a prominent Akali leader, argued that Punjab should be ruled by a Sikh organization.
4. **State Reorganization Commission** report 1955 rejected the demand since demand was communal + Punjab shared borders with Pakistan + recent partition on communal lines + no threshold level difference between Punjabi & Hindi for reorganisation on linguistic lines.
5. **State Reorganization Act 1956** only added Princely States of Punjab i.e. PEPSU (Patiala & East Punjab States Union-1948-56). Hence Punjab existed as a 3 language state – Hindi, Punjabi & Pahadi.
6. In **1966 Indira Gandhi separated Haryana from Punjab** with Chandigarh as common capital & a UT because:
 - a. Long pending demand
 - b. Hindi speaking groups also demanded Haryana
 - c. Sant Fateh Singh, an Akali leader, assured that demand was not communal but linguistic i.e. no discrimination on basis of religion after reorganization
 - d. However no consensus on Chandigarh & territory Punjab should give to Haryana (Abohar & Fazilka) in return for Chandigarh.
7. But Akalis still could not form a single party majority govt in 1967 elections (*formed coalition govt with Jana Sangha) & in 1971 Congress came to power in Punjab. This was because now Punjab had 60% Sikh & 40 % Hindus but of 60% Sikh, 25% were Mazhabi Sikhs i.e. Dalits who were not vote bank of Akalis.
8. Hence to consolidate Sikh votes Akalis brought **Anantapur Sahib Resolution** in Oct 1973 (**ASR1973**) which became main set of demands for future for Akalis.
9. Following **features of ASR1973**

- a. Chandigarh & other Punjabi speaking areas of neighboring states to Punjab
- b. Favorable River Water Sharing treaty @Ravi, Beas, Sutlej with Haryana & Rajasthan
- c. More % of Sikh in army
- d. Demand of true federalism by amending constitution to have a weak Centre & strong state i.e. Centre's power in States be limited to Defense, Foreign Affairs, Currency and some aspects of general administration. (*a regional party always wants a weak Centre as it cant be in power at Centre)
- e. Preamble of ASR1973 stated that Akalis are representatives of a Sikh Nation although Political Goal was defined as Autonomy within India. (*Two Nation One State Solution)
- f. During Emergency (1975-77)- Akalis were imprisoned and in 1977 came to power and also revived demands of ASR1973

10. Rise of **Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale**

- a. **Nirankaris** consider themselves as Sikh but believe in a living Guru hence regarded as heretics by other Sikhs
- b. 1978- Nirankaris were to hold big rally in Amritsar and Bhindrawale was leading the opposition to this meeting. He gave a hate speech from Golden Temple and his supporters attacked the meeting. In clashes 15 died (including Bhindrawale supporters). This raised his profile.
- c. **Personality-**
 - i. Inspiring preacher with deep knowledge of Sikh scriptures
 - ii. Left family to head a seminary called Damdami Taksal
 - iii. He wanted Sikh to purify themselves and return to golden past e.g. spoke against alcohol, tobacco, cutting of hair etc
 - iv. He raised political tensions e.g. argued that Sikh are slaves in India and are discriminated against by Hindus.
 - v. Some argue that Sanjay Gandhi & Gyani Zail Singh (Congress Sikh leader, CM, then Union Minister, then President) cultivated Bhindrawale to create a bigger religious icon than Akalis to cut vote base of Akalis. Whoever supported Bhindrawale, he later showed his own Charisma and acted independently.

vi. Bhindrawale got support of

1. Lower Sikh castes of Aritsans & Laborers as they saw purification as a path for social mobility
2. Many Jat peasants as he argued that Green Revolution has benefitted only the big landlords and this resonated with small peasants.
3. General increase in religiosity due to unexpected benefits of Green Revolution increased support base.

11. **June 1980- Khalistan** proclaimed in Golden Temple by followers of **Jagjit Singh Chouhan** who was settled abroad. Proclamation was made also in UK, US, Canada. This was a small group and not a threat.
12. Major concern of Congress was Akali Dal which had began protests under **new leader Longowal** who operated from Golden Temple.
13. **1980 onwards**, phase of protests by Akalis and killings by Bhindrawale supporters e.g.
 - a. **Apr 1980- Gurcharan Singh**, leader of Nirankaris, was shot dead in Delhi.
 - b. **Sep 1981- Lala Jagat Narain**, editor of Punjab Kesari, who wrote anti communal politics articles shot dead in daylight.
14. Bhindrawale was not arrested immediately and when arrested in Sep 1981, it was ensured only Sikh policemen arrest him. Then protests began in Punjab & he was released on grounds of lack of evidence within 26 days. This was **turning point in his popularity** as perception that Indian State is afraid to act against him.
15. November 1981- **Bhindrawale made Golden Temple his headquarters**. He setup a parallel govt eg settled disputes and cases + conducted campaign for ASR1973.
16. April 1983, he came to Delhi with his armed supporters to demand release of his supporters. Marched towards President House (Gyani Zail Singh), was detained but released.
17. **1982- Negotiations on ASR1973** between Akalis & GOI failed. Major issues were Chandigarh & River Water Sharing.
18. **1983- Akali MLAs resigned** & thus suggested disloyalty to Constitution of India. This was product of competition for Sikh support between Bhindrawale & Akalis. Thus Akalis took more radical step since Bhindrawale's popularity was rising.

19. **15 Apr 1983- DIG A.S. Atwal shot dead** in Golden Temple complex and his body could not be picked up for hours. Thus morale of police crashed + Banks robberies followed + exodus of Hindus began + Hindy Suraksha Sanghas setup for defence and hence centuries old Hindu Sikh unity began collapsing.
20. **@Khalistan-** Bhindrawale stated that Sikh are a separate community. He didn't demand Khalistan directly but stated that wont refuse if offered + attacked the Central Govt e.g. referred to Indira Gandhi as Panditain & declared that wont go to meet PM and she can come to meet him if she wants. He increased communal tensions further with hate speeches.
21. By **end of 1983 he took residence in Akal Takht** which has great symbolic value as it was from here that Gurus gave Hukumnamas + sikh warriors took blessings before fighting against Mughals + Guru Gobind Singh compiled Guru Granth Sahib here.
22. **3rd June 1984- Operation Blue Star :**
- a. 100s of army men died & 100s of Bhindrawale supporters & Bhindrawale killed + Golden Temple complex was damaged + tanks were used.
 - b. It was not a well planned operation i.e. not based on effective intelligence on military preparations inside the complex.
 - c. Rampant communal violence followed
 - d. Even neutral youth joined militancy
 - e. Indira Gandhi was killed by her bodyguards on 31 Oct 1984
 - f. Anti Sikh riots in Delhi where police remained inactive for 3 days.
 - g. Agitations by Akalis continued
23. **July 1985- Punjab Accords** or Rajiv-Longowal Accords [not fully implemented]
- a. Compensation to those killed after 1 Aug 1982
 - b. Rehabilitation for Sikhs who deserted Army
 - c. Chandigarh to Punjab
 - d. Sarkaria Commission to deal with federal demands
 - e. A Tribunal for river Water Sharing
 - f. Promote Punjabi
 - g. Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal construction to continue
 - h. Hindi areas of Punjab to Haryana
 - i. Merit to be only criteria for recruitment to army

24. 1987-91: President Rule

25. 1988 Operation Blackthunder

- a. After Operation Bluestar & assassination of Indira Gandhi, militants believed that police/army won't ever enter Golden Temple again. Thus took safe haven in Golden Temple
- b. Much better planned as on basis of effective intelligence.
- c. Without any damage to Golden Temple, militants were flushed out and their leaders neutralized.

26. 1992 elections- Congress came to power due to low voter turnout

27. **KPS Gill, IPS** given free hand to deal with militancy. He gave Gill Doctrine

- a. People don't support militants, they support the stronger faction as they fear for their own security
- b. Thus Police should demonstrate that they are more powerful
- c. He was ruthless and eliminated militancy in Punjab
- d. The leadership of militants was targeted and eliminated
- e. But in process civilians suffered either at hands of militants or of police as there were allegations of rapes and murders.

Q- Language, Religion & Regionalism combined into an explosive problem in Punjab.

Examine.