

Partition of Punjab: Changes in Political Trends

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Part III

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After Partition, West Punjab had an area of 61,980 square miles and it formed **the biggest** provincial unit of Pakistan. Its population was 15.80 million the second largest in Pakistan. Therefore the inhabitants in West Punjab dominated in Pakistan. After Partition, however, East Punjab became **the smallest** province of India. It had an area of 37,428 sq miles and a population of 12.6 million.⁴⁵

The partition of Punjab resolved the 'communal' and minority problems in the West Punjab, as all the Sikhs and the Hindus migrated to the East Punjab. Similarly, it solved the Muslim Vs. non-Muslim problem in East Punjab, as almost all Muslims migrated to the West Punjab. But the exodus of the Muslim population from East Punjab did not solve the minority problem in the new state. The cross-migration of population improved the position of the Sikhs as a powerful minority. In united Punjab, the Sikhs were only thirteen per cent, whereas in the East Punjab after migration, they formed about thirty-three per cent of the population. In the United Punjab, the Sikh population was so scattered that they did not form a majority in any of the districts. After partition, however, the Sikhs formed a majority in the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana.

"This great concentration of very nationally minded and very martial people in a comparatively very small area must be a cause of anxiety to the Govt. of India."⁴⁶ Prof. Tinker also wrote that **"Among the military races in India today, the most obvious political problem is posed by the Sikhs. The Sikhs lost some of their richest agricultural land by partition and have nourished a sense of grievance ever since. Their tough bellicosity has been channelled into the army service. Their sense of grievance and isolation has led to the demand of a Punjabi speaking Sikh state."**⁴⁷

In the post partition state, one of the important political problems in East Punjab was the language issue. In the United Punjab, according to Grierson, the dominant language was Punjabi, but neither Muslims nor Hindus owned it. Since Indian National Congress was committed to carve out states on linguistic basis, the inhabitants of Punjab, particularly Sikhs, put forward the demand of Punjabi speaking state. **The Punjabi Hindus opposed it. In order to counteract this demand, they organised Hindi Raksha Samiti and pressed for 'Maha Punjab.'** The Shiromani Akali Dal, the most influential organisation of Sikhs launched agitation for creation of Punjabi speaking state popularly known as Punjabi Suba. Thus Hindu Sikh tensions mounted.

Historically speaking Hindu-Sikh tension had its origin in irreverent language for Guru Nanak and his followers used by Swami Dayananda, the founder of Arya Samaj, in his book, *Satyarth Prakash* published in 1875, the year in which Arya Samaj was established in Bombay.

The term used for Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was "*dhurta*", which according to Bate's Dictionary of the Hindi language, means "rogue, cheat, fraudulent, crafty, cunning, knavish, sly, dishonest, and mischievous." The hymn of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh

scripture, he called *mithya* (falsehood) and Sikhism a *jal* (snare) to rob and cheat simple folk of their wealth and property (*dhan adik, haran ke waste*).

Two years later in 1877, Swami Dayananda came to Punjab and established the Arya Samaj at Lahore. In his discourse in Punjab, he always praised the work of the Sikh Gurus. This attracted a number of Sikhs to the Arya Samaj. One of them, Bhai Jawahar Singh, later became secretary of the Lahore Arya Samaj and DAV College Managing Committee.

While Swami Dayananda was at Kanpur on his return from the Punjab, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sub-Engineer of the Ajmer Division wrote to him in protest against his objectionable remarks in the "Satyarth Prakash" against the Sikhs and Sikhism. **Swamiji wrote back saying that his opinion had undergone a change during his visit to Punjab and that the remarks in question would be deleted from the next edition of the book.** But nothing came to be done. It was, perhaps, due to the untimely death of Swamiji on Oct. 10, 1883. The second edition of the "Satyarth Prakash" was perhaps then still in the press. The edition of the *Satyarth Prakash*, and the admission of some overzealous youngmen into the Arya Samaj, the attitude of some of the leading Arya Samajists became increasingly hostile towards Sikhs and Sikhism. The columns of the *Arya Samachar*, Meerut and the *Arya Patrika*, Lahore, of those days bear witness to this."

"The second edition of *Satyarth Prakash* turned out to be more disappointing and hostile. In it, the attack on the Sikh Gurus, the Sikh scriptures, and the Sikh people in general, was more direct, more biting and more painful. Guru Nanak was given out as illiterate and self conceited. The Sikh scripture was insulted and the tenets and symbols of Sikhism were ridiculed."

This naturally disillusioned such of the Sikhs as were members of the Arya Samaj, or were its active supporters. They felt very much hurt and dejected. What added to the tension was the fanatical attitude of some members of the Arya Samaj who went out of their way to flash the wrongful remarks of *Satyarth Prakash* and unnecessarily wounded the susceptibilities of the Sikhs."⁴⁸

The Shiromani Akali Dal had launched an agitation for Punjabi Suba in 1955. Consequently, the Hindus in Punjab gave Hindi as their mother tongue in the Census Report of 1961, which was evidently untrue because they spoke Punjabi at their homes.

Jawaharlal Nehru was against the creation of a Punjabi speaking state. His argument was that Punjabi had been recognised as one of the regional languages in the Constitution. Sr. Partap Singh Kairon, who was the Chief Minister of Punjab during that tenure of Nehru, was also against the creation of Punjabi Suba. But soon after the death of both, the entire region was reorganised into Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, conceding the Punjabi Suba demand, in 1966. The Hindi speaking areas were separated and Punjab was declared to be Punjabi speaking, like other states in the rest of India.

Chandigarh, which was originally built as capital of Punjab, was made capital of both - Haryana and Punjab, as a Union Territory.

The Punjab Princely states were first organised in 1948 to form 'Patiala and East Punjab States Union' (PEPSU). It had also large Punjabi speaking areas. Therefore, it was merged with (East) Punjab in 1966 when Punjabi speaking state was formed. In 1966, the Hindi speaking areas were separated from PEPSU and Punjab both, reducing the Punjab to a mini-state.

The Punjabi language and culture suffered a lot due to partition of Punjab in 1947 as most of the Punjabi speaking areas were left in Pakistan. The Pakistani Punjabi began to develop on different line, in Urdu script, with large number of Persian words, and Punjabi in India began to absorb Hindi terminology.

- End of Part III
(Concluded)



References

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