

Sikh Response(S) To Radcliffe Award And The Partition Of Punjab

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Abstract

The partition of India in 1947 into two states as a culmination of the Radcliffe Award left an indelible mark on the socio-political landscape of the subcontinent and particularly of Punjab. The religious, social and political setting of Punjab was different from other Indian provinces because beside Muslims and Hindus, the Sikhs formed the third majority but a dominant community whose loyalties with the British made them their favourites. They were provided representation in the army ten times more than their strength. After World War II, the British government sent Mountbatten with a two point agenda of entrusting powers to the two Indian states and their membership in Commonwealth. The Sikhs also suddenly found themselves in a new and difficult situation. The Radcliffe Award separated Sikh communities and deprived them of their homeland who then with their martial race attitude, resisted the division of Punjab because it was a home to their sacred shrines; the Canal colonies were established there and; in the past, the Sikhs had ruled it during 1799-1849. Soon afterward, the Sikh-Muslim riots took place as a reaction to the partition which had altered Sikh identity. This current research paper tries to explore the varied reactions of the Sikhs to the partition of Punjab and endeavours to answer the question that how the Radcliffe Award affected the Sikh community and what response (s) they presented to the partition of Punjab?

Key Words: Sikh, Response, Mountbatten, Radcliffe Award, Partition, Punjab.

Introduction

Punjab as the fifth largest province of British India is located to the north west of the Subcontinent. Its strategic location from ancient to modern times has made it a very important route for the conquerors, invaders, traders and tourists. Different people and races have ruled it in different times. The Sikhs claimed Punjab as a home of both Guru Nanak and Sikhism while their most sacred place, Harimandir popularly known as the Darbar Sahib (the Golden Temple) was at Amritsar (Singh, 1992). The Sikhs practiced their religion in Punjab peacefully till their relations with the Mughal kings deteriorated because some of their Gurus got involved in royal

conspiracies who were punished (Munawar, 1989, p. 159). The Sikhs in retaliation distanced themselves from the Mughals.

During the weak Mughals, the Sikhs started increasing their force in Punjab and finally Ranjit Singh (1790-1839) succeeded in getting control of the province by turning it into a strong and independent Sikh kingdom during 1799-1849. He expanded the areas by including Multan,

Kashmir and Peshawar to his domain. However, after his death, anarchy, bloodshed and internal strife of six years destabilized the state. British

after two successful battles in 1846 and 1849 captured the government (Qalb-i-Abid, 1992, p. 2) and thus Punjab became a British Punjab (Ali, 2003, p. vii).

The British provoked the Sikhs' sentiments against Bahadur Shah Zafar during the War of Independence in 1857. The deep-rooted animosity of Sikhs towards Mughals led them to align with the British for avenging the deaths of their Gurus, Tegh Bahadur, Gobind Singh and his sons (Vairanpillai, 1946, p. 121). They on account of their extraordinary services to the British soon became their favorites and received a 'Martial Race' status. The British grant them estates in the new colonies and made special arrangements for their recruitment in army and police. The British fostered a sense of separatism in them by officially recognizing the Sikhs as a separate community through a separate representation in legislatures and through specific privileges to them in government services. The Hindus on the other hand considered the Sikhs as their own sub-castes by rejecting their separate entity (Singh, 1992, p. 30). Despite that the Hindus on political ground always enlisted the cooperation of the Sikhs against the Muslims (Munawar, 1989, p. 166).

The strategic and geographical importance, incomparable agriculture resources and as a recruitment ground for the British, Punjab became an integral part of the British Empire (Qalb-i-Abid, 1992, p. 35). At the end of World War I, nearly three-fifths of the recruits in the British Indian Army were sourced from this specific region (Low, 1991, p. 264). The British partitioned the province into the five divisions of Ambala, Jullundur, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan that comprised 29 districts with Lahore as the capital. Each of these divisions was placed under the jurisdiction of separate commissioners and 29 districts were placed under the authority of a deputy commissioner or collector (Saadullah, 1993, pp. 299-300). Out of these 29, 17 were predominantly Muslim majority districts while 12

were non-Muslim majority districts (Close, 1997, p. 32). There were roughly twenty-two Princely States which were ruled by Indian princes who maintained political relationship with the government of Punjab or with the British Indian government directly (Shankar, 2019, p. 223).

During imperial control, the main source of employment for Sikhs was military. The strength of the Sikhs was 10% in the Indian army during World War II. This meant that they were seven times more disproportionately recruited in the army compared to their share of the population (Parkin, 1945, pp. 89-90). The British and Sikhs remained notably friendly during the entire colonial rule (Singh, 1992, p. 35).

The Sikhs Entrance into Politics

The initial clash between Sikhs and the British occurred during a protest against the Rowlatt Act in 1919, resulting in the loss of over 375 people and thousands injured, predominantly Sikhs (Singh, 1992, p. 35). Then a tension aroused over the management of Sikh shrines, including the Golden Temple in 1920. The Siromoni Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) was formed with the dual objectives of introducing reforms in Sikh Gurdwaras and reclaiming authority over Sikh shrines from governmental control. An affiliated group of SGPC called Akali Dal (Squad of God) was established in December 1920 for organizing Jathas (armed group) with the objective of gaining control over the Sikh shrines. The name Akali was derived from the martyr warriors of Ranjit Singh era to defend the Sikh faith (Padhyay, 2015, p. 305). The Akalis initiated an extensive passive resistance movement aimed for the control of Gurdwaras. The British then introduced the Gurdwara Act of 1925 and transferred the control of all Sikh shrines including the Golden Temple in Amritsar, from priests to an elected body of SGPC. The Akalis then became a primary political party representing Sikhs, while the committee

functioned as its miniature parliament. It later on participated in elections and won 10 seats in 1936 and 21 seats in 1946 in Punjab (Singh K. , 1967, p. 407).

The Sikh Muslim Confrontation

The Punjab for Muslim League was the second-largest Muslim province with 56% Muslim population. The Muslim League believed itself to be the only representative party of the Muslims of India and without both Punjab and Bengal it could not make this claim. In the 1941 Census, the population Punjab was; Muslims was 16,217,742 (57.1%), Hindus 6,301,737 (22.2%), and Sikhs 3,757,401 (13.2%) which were divided along communal lines. Although Hindus were the largest minority but the Sikhs were the dominant community without having any single district of Punjab and were mostly living around Lahore, Kangra and Patiala (F-131; Davis, 1951, p. 181).

The Sikhs were 13 percent of the total population during the Communal Awards in 1932 but were given 20 percent seats in the Provincial Assembly. They also wanted veto powers in Punjab. On the occasion of the first Round Table Conference (RTC) in 1930-31, Sikhs demanded Independent Punjab (Munawar, 1989, p. 166) and weightage for themselves and Hindus to prevent Muslim domination. The call was for partition of Punjab, aiming to separate certain western districts with Muslim majority from the non-Muslims minority, so as to create a smaller and homogenous province by getting rid of a permanent Muslim majority (Giani, 1946, pp. 6-7) but Gandhi and Indian National Congress (INC) did not support this demand which widened the gap between Sikhs and the Congress and resulted in Sikh joining of Unionist Party (a cross communal organization) and remained in it till the resignation of Khizar Hayat in March 1947. For a brief period, they turned against Sikandar ministry after Sikandar-Jinnah Pact of 1937 but due to flexibility of leaders, the coalition continued. Again when Sikandar became part of

Lahore Resolution in March 1940, the Sikh leaders felt annoyed and Sikandar had to solidify the alliance with them through a Pact with Baldev Singh in 1942. However, the crushing defeat of Unionists and the clear victory of Muslim League in 1946 elections made the Sikhs distressed and they instead of joining hands with Muslim League preferred to form Unionist-Congress-Akali ministry (Moon, 1961, pp. 36-37).

Sikhs diehard critique of Pakistan Resolution exacerbated the rift between Muslims and Sikhs. Master Tara Singh, Akali leader and the SGPC member, and Sunder Singh Majithia, leader of the Khalsa (Pure) National Party opposed Pakistan Resolution as to avoid Muslim Raj (Rule) in Punjab, being their home as well as a holy land (Nijjar, 1974, p. 166). They also threatened that in the face of the acceptance of the demand for Pakistan, the division of Punjab is inevitable, as they are not ready for a subservient role in a Muslim majority province.

When Cripps mission arrived in India in 1942, Jinnah assured the Sikhs a respectable position and an influential role in the Muslim homeland while in united India they would be mere nobodies. Baldev refuse to join Muslim League or to accept Pakistan (Ahmad, 1968, p. 58) and put forward some conditions before League to either drop Pakistan scheme or elucidate Sikh position in the scheme (Singh H. , 1945, p. 52).

In response, the Sikhs advocated for the Sikh State of Khalistan or Pure Land and received support for it this time from the Hindu Mahasabha (Grand Assembly) (Rai, 1986, p. 57). Their proposal was for new borders, extending as far west as River Chenab, encompassing Sikh shrines, and determining the Canal Zone through a commission composed of impartial members (Munawar, 1989, p. 167). The proposed Sikh States comprised central Punjab with Lahore and Jullundur divisions, as well as areas of Ambala and Multan divisions, incorporating the territories of Sikh princely states and Maler Kotla (Singh K.

, 1967, p. 401). The Sikhs wanted to get rid of both Pakistan and Hindustan for preservation and protection of their religious, economic, cultural and political rights.

The growing communalism was added by the rising popularity of Muslim League in Punjab which further alarmed the Sikhs. The election results of 1946 compelled the British government to send the Cabinet Mission to offer freedom to India in a manner acceptable to all especially the Hindus and Muslims. Cabinet mission proposed the grouping of provinces. Punjab formed part of one of the two groups of provinces. The Sikhs bitterly criticized the scheme and declared boycott of it in every respect and threatened Muslims with waging a bloody war against them (Munawar, 1989, p. 169).

Lord Wavell's plan of 1946 was working along the same line of Punjab and Bengal's partitions; a concept which was initially set in motion by Sardar K. M. Pannikar and was further elaborated by V. P. Menon and Benegal Rao who had close links with the Congress. Menon was even a very close friend of Vallabh Bhai Patel. Few days later, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution of dividing Punjab and showed Sikhs its inevitability that supported it for removing the danger to Sikhism through the partition of Punjab (F-131, pp. 2-3). The Sikhs welcomed it without understanding. On the other hand, Muslim League and Jinnah were totally unaware of the British and Congress plan of ultimate shape of Pakistan (Lamb, 1997, pp. 33-34).

Prime Minister Attlee announced on 20th February 1947 to entrust powers to the Indians no later than June 1948 (Menon, 1957, p. 861) and designated Mountbatten as the last Indian Viceroy. He was instructed about the objectives of his work which included the establishment of a unitary government that would function within the British Commonwealth through a Constituent Assembly as suggested by the Cabinet Mission Plan. Mountbatten reached Delhi on 22 March

and engaged in discussions with Indian leaders to assess the prevailing situation.

On meeting Jinnah in April, Mountbatten rejected his proposal for the division of India and dismissed Pakistan as 'sheer madness' and his two-nation theory as 'flawed.' He argued that the division of India on religious grounds would inevitably lead to the partition of Punjab and Bengal along religious lines. Jinnah objected that Mountbatten has not understood Punjab and Bengal as nations in themselves, with individuals as Punjabi and Bengali first, and then as Hindus, Sikhs, or Muslims second. He warned that such partition would result in endless bloodshed and peace in India is only possible through a fully independent Pakistan (Mansregh, 1982, pp. 137-39).

After six meetings with Jinnah, Mountbatten finally agreed to the partition of India, Punjab and Bengal and the establishment of Pakistan. He also argued that it is the acceptance of Congress' demand for the partition of Punjab and Bengal (Lapierre, 1982, p. 123). Jinnah considered it as a "sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness" (Menon, 1957, p. 355). Jinnah found himself with no alternative but to accept the division, compelled by the necessity of partitioning Punjab and Bengal.

After the announcement of 3rd June Plan, Jinnah met Sikh leaders, assuring them a very fair deal in the subsequent state and could enjoy autonomy in the routine affairs and administration of the region for their alliance with Muslim League (Ispahani, 1959, p. 258). Liaquat Ali Khan also held several talks with Baldev Singh but the Sikhs insisted on Azad Punjab (Prasad, 1978, p. 269). The most important feature of Azad Punjab scheme was its insistence on separation of Punjab from the overwhelming majority of the Muslim areas.

The Akali leadership decision to join India instead of demanding a separate state during partition has positioned them as a marginalized minority in the subsequent developments. The

Sikhs failed to achieve something beneficial because they were very simple people and have not fully understood the intricate political dynamics in Punjab during that time. They totally failed during the last moment of independence and the complex political circumstances left the Akali leaders with no favorable alternatives and their decision to align with India was the most prudent choice (Sandhu, 2012, p. 215). The hatred of Sikhs with Muslim led them to join hands with Hindus and their religious pattern with Hindu religion also played vital role for the decision during the partition. The decision of the Sikh leadership to align with India also saw the influence of two-state policy of the British.

The 3rd June Plan outlined a commitment to a two-state formula but the Sikhs vehemently opposed it, rejected it and termed the partition plan as “grossly unjust.” Mountbatten considered the plan in accordance with their wishes as they themselves had presented it from the Congress platform. He also declared that the partition of Punjab would inevitably divide the small community of Sikhs into two halves; 18 lacs on the one side and 20 lacs on the other side (Das, 1985, p. 129) while if the contiguous area principle is strictly applied, all the canal colonies and about two million Sikhs would fall in Pakistan (Moon, 1961, p. 69). The partition would result in 17 Muslim districts and 12 non-Muslims Districts (Das, 1985, p. 754) but it would be carried out in such a way so as to cause least damage to Sikhs and Hindus.

The Sikhs and Congress were against the division of Punjab or the inclusion of whole Punjab in Pakistan which seemed inevitable and under compulsion accepted the first option. Several members of the Sikh intelligentsia put responsibility on Baldev Singh for accepting the partition plan who requested Mountbatten to ask the Punjab Boundary Commission to safeguard the interests of his community. The Sikh newspapers urged the Sikhs to foil the partition scheme as it is the final attempt of the British to

dismantle Sikhs and erase their presence from the political landscape of India (Pandey, 2001, p. 33). They reverted from their own utterances and Baldev Singh asserted that partition solely based on population would not suffice and that the Sikhs also deserve a homeland (NDW, 1947, p. 82).

The Panth (Spritual) Assembly Party, the Working Committees of Akali Dal and the Prabindhi Panthic Board in a joint resolution in the 1st Week of June stated that any partition of Punjab which does not safeguard the unity and integrity of the Sikhs will not be acceptable to them (Mitra, 1947, p. 261; Sharma, 1994, p. 365). Moreover, the Akali Dal adopted the Resolution on 8 June 1947 for securing the inclusion of all their rich agricultural land and property in the west Punjab (Government, 1948, p. 3). The Sikhs observed 8 July as a ‘protest day’ to mark their annoyance against the proposed partition which was basically a rehearsal for the large scale upheaval after the announcement of the Boundary awards (Punjab Police Secret Abstrat of Intelligence, 1947, p. 351). Giani Kartar Singh, president of Akali Dal recorded on 19 July that the Sikhs have not accepted the 3rd June plan and have questions to answer (Government, 1948, pp. 3-4).

The Sikhs inclusion in Pakistan became impossible as they considered Muslim League responsible for the division plan. The relations became strained during the making of Punjab ministry and the exclusion of the League from the Unionist ministry. The division deepened following the implementation of governor rule in Punjab 8 March 1947. Alarmed by the Punjab partition, Jinnah tactically opted to reinstate discussions with the Sikhs. Both Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan tried to avoid the partition of Punjab and made a last attempt to convince the Sikhs and come to terms with them (Kapur, 1985, p. 94). Both of them guaranteed Sikh leaders all the freedom and a position of honor in the new Muslim state but the Sikh leaders declined to

accept the offer (Ispahani, 1959, p. 258) and all such efforts failed.

During the whole period, the Sikhs remained confused and hesitant to accept Jinnah's offer of special autonomy for the Sikhs within Pakistan (Khan, 2002, p. 119). Despite deception by the Congress, the Sikhs joined hands with it and voted for the partition of Punjab. Some of the Sikhs made efforts to come to term with Jinnah before the announcement of Radcliffe Award and submitted certain conditions to join Pakistan but it was too late and by siding with the Congress, they had missed the opportunity.

At last the Punjab Legislative Assembly thereupon divided and 91 members recorded their votes in favor of a new Constituent Assembly while 77 voted for the present Constituent Assembly (Mansregh, 1982, p. 567; Sharma, 1994, pp. 383-384). The Punjab Legislative Assembly by casting their votes finally decided the partition of Punjab. Now for the division of Punjab, Boundary Commission was set up with four members from High Court with high judicial standing.

The Sikhs wanted the consideration of their historical, religious ties, and land ownership in Punjab. Conversely, the Muslims wanted them drawn narrowly for Punjab for opposing reasons. Eventually the leaders agreed on a simple formula, which originated from the Congress side. The provision 'other factors' on the recommendation of Congress was accepted by the British government to consider the 'special circumstances of the Sikh community' (Sohail, 1991, p. 67). It was also decided that Congress will nominate one Sikh judge for the Boundary Commission of the Punjab to give voice to the Sikhs in Boundary Commission. Nehru suggested the names of Mr. Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan and Mr. Justice Teja Singh names for Punjab. The Boundary Commission was set up and started its work from the 30th June 1947. Radcliffe was

appointed as the Chairman of both commissions who reached Delhi on 8 July 1947.

Punjab was apparently very simple as western districts had Muslim population while eastern districts had non-Muslim population and a line demarcation between Lahore and Amritsar would effectively partition the province into two nearly equal parts. However, this line was non-natural due to geographical, ethnic and economic issues which made demarcation of Punjab quite difficult. The Division of the province was a crucial task as it entailed the separation of over 28 million people along with thousands of villages, towns, canal system, communication system with 16 million Muslims and 12 million non-Muslims (Butalia, 1999, pp. 63- 64) while 37 lacs Sikhs who despite their religious differences shared a common Punjabi identity.

The Principle set for the partition of the areas was contiguous Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas. However, each community had different interpretations regarding division of the province. The demands of boundaries demarcations were purely on the basis of personal interest and were mostly along religious, economic, political, and population lines and there was no reconciliation to these claims. Muslims' claim was on the basis of religion and demography while Hindus' claim was grounded on other factors, the Sikhs' claim on the contrary was primarily rooted in religious sentiments, contributions to the development of the areas, substantial landholdings, and most importantly 'other factors.' The population in Punjab was intermingled particularly in the central districts. Drawing any boundary line would inevitably result in significant numbers of individuals from all three communities finding themselves on the wrong side of the demarcation (Moon, 1961, p. 34).

The Commission received instructions to delineate the boundaries of the two Punjabs on the basis of ascertaining contiguous Muslim and non-Muslims populated areas and in the process, it

was instructed to consider “other factors” (Ghai, 1986, p. 127). Both official and non-official quarters expressed deep concern about the Sikhs because they were spread over various areas of the western districts and were religiously, culturally and economically connected to those areas. However, the British Government’s granting of a special position to the Sikhs and the inclusion of ‘other factors’ in the terms of reference for the Boundary Commission heightened their significance (Rai, 1986, p. 70)

Mountbatten favored the Sikhs during his communication with Radcliffe regarding the inclusion of Zira and Ferozpur Tehsils in Pakistan which contained a large Sikh minority and delayed the publication of Radcliffe Award for fearing hostile Sikh reaction. Giani Kartar Singh threatened about violent action of the Sikhs if they felt dissatisfied with the Award and would launch guerrilla war after 15 August if their demands were not met. The Sikhs insisted on preserving their integrity and solidarity by emphasizing on the need to safeguard their sacred shrines (Saadullah, 1993, p. xv).

The specter of communal violence was already looming in the atmosphere. Evan Jenkins as Governor wrote a secret letter to Mountbatten on 9 April informing him about Giani Singh and Master Tara Singh’s appeal for 50 Lakh rupees for “war fund” and organized attacks of Sikhs against Muslim (Bhasin, 1998, p. 36). Giani Kartar Singh openly warned Jenkins on 10 July about the reaction of the Sikhs by potentially sabotaging communications and canal works (Hudson, 1985, p. 338). The Sikhs demanded control over at least one canal system preferably Montgomery and sought possession of the birth place of Guru Nanak at Nankana Sahib. They also demanded that three quarter or at least two third of the Sikh population should be brought into Eastern Punjab (Mansregh, 1982, p. 56).

Mountbatten openly admitted that the Sikh community would be divided into equal parts without having an alternative solution and

said that he is not a ‘miracle maker’ or ‘magician’ (Mansregh, 1982, pp. 112-117). However, he assured the Sikhs their traditional strength in the officer and ranks of the Armed Forces of Hindustan, and six percent representation in both Houses of the Federal Legislature (Mansregh, 1982, pp. 760-761). He and Jenkins already assured Baldev Singh about the safeguard of Sikh interests in the Boundary Commission.

Mountbatten asked Radcliffe to place the best notional boundary line without doing violence to the population (Lapierre, 1982, p. 70) and hoped that Radcliffe would remember the Sikh problem while finalizing the boundary Punjab. Mountbatten revealed that he has informed Radcliffe about the worse attitude of Sikhs. He emphasized that Pakistan should be compensated more in Bengal than in Punjab since there was no Sikh problem in Bengal (Datta, 1999, p. 859).

The major interest of Sikhs falls in the western and central Punjab where Muslims were predominant. The major part of the Sikh population, their religious shrines, educational institutions, agricultural property, business and commercial interests were concentrated in the four western and central divisions of the province but this area was liable to become part of Pakistan due to predominant Muslim majority (Arif, 1991, pp. 275-276). The Sikhs made a mixture of official and unofficial claims, On the merit of ‘other factors’ and hoped for the shifting of boundary westward to River Chenab which would not only avoid the split of their community into two but would also include Montgomery, Sheikhpura, Lyallpur and Amritsar district in East Punjab (Moon, 1961, p. 88) where they had their holy shrines and extensive landholdings only. Besides, they hoped to exercise physical control over the whole of Punjab by getting hold of the main irrigation centers. They also demanded Nankana Sahib in Sheikhpura to be included in the East Punjab. Similar demands

were also made by Maharaja Patiala and Baldev Singh (Zaidi, 2000, p. 384).

The numerical disparity posed a significant challenge for the Sikh community as they constituted only 13 or 14 percent of the total population of the undivided Punjab and comprised only 1 percent of the overall population of India at the time of partition (Kaur, 1985, p. 6). For unity and integrity factor, the Sikh leaders were devising a destructive scheme by posing a threat of annihilation to the people of Punjab, including the Sikhs (Ali C. M., 1983, p. 158). Jenkins stated on 30 July 1947 that Giani Kartar Singh wanted to vacate East Punjab from the Muslims first and then the Hindus for the creation of a separate Sikh state (Quraishi, 1995, p. 618).

The militant wings, Akali Fauj and Shahidi Jathas (Suicide squads) launched a campaign for recruiting volunteers. Master Tara Singh along with 280 Jathedar took the vow at the Akal Takht on 13 April 1947 to sacrifice their lives for the survival of Sikh community. They started arming the Jathas with adequate weapons and a campaign was launched to collect 50 lakh rupees for the defense fund and contacts were made with militant Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or National Volunteer Organization and Sikh rulers of princely states (Kapur, 1985, p. 121). Till June, the total strength of Akali Fauj exceeded 10,000 men who were skillfully trained in the art of war (Haq, 1970, pp. 165-166). The political objective of this Fauj and RSS was to launch attacks on the life and property of Muslims to throw them out of the Punjab (Zaidi, 2000, p. 324). Jathabandi (Squad-making) was started in several districts of the Punjab (Haq, 1970, p. 166). The members of the Gurdwara Defense Force of Nankana Sahib were also active by taking daily exercises and practicing Jatha and Lathi fighting (Punjab Police Secret Abstrat of Intelligence, 1947, p. 387). The Sikhs had planned to agitate on large scale if Nankana Sahib was not included in East Punjab

and had collected plenty of arms for the purpose (Mansregh, 1982, p. 369). The Punjab government put ban on all meetings except religious (Zaidi, 2000, p. 404)

The RSS had 3200 regular members, 8,000 temporary members in the Punjab (Nijjar, 1974, p. 203) and 10 paid propagandists. Their main center was located at Jammu but they set up their training camps and recruitment centers for the 1947 civil war in Punjab (Punjab Police Secret Abstrat of Intelligence, 1947, p. 379). To calm down the Sikhs, Menon proposed that Jinnah should declare Nankana Sahib as "sort of Vatican" which would cost Jinnah little than concede (Mosley, 1962, p. 211). Jenkins endorsed the Sikhs claim as justified for being pioneers of the canal colonies in Montgomery and Lyallpur. The Maharaja of Patiala also requested Mountbatten to retain Montgomery, Diplapur, part of Pakpattan and Okara in the East Punjab (Zaidi, 2000, p. 384).

The Sikhs aimed to relocate boundary in the Punjab by extending it as far as the River Chenab and to include the districts of Gurdaspur, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Sheikhpura, Lahore, Montgomery and Lyallpur in East Punjab. According to the 1941 Census, all these districts were characterized by a Muslim majority. Even in the Guradaspur district, where non-Muslims held a majority in the Pathankot Tehsil, the percentage of Muslims was recorded at 51.14 percent. In the districts of Eastern Punjab, the total population and community population ratio was: Lahore had 1,695,375 total population, out of which 1,027,772 were Muslims; Sialkot had 1,190,497 total population, Muslims were 739,218; Sheikhpura had 852,508 total population and the Muslims were 542,344; Lyallpur had 1,396,305 total population, out of which 877,518 were Muslims; Montgomery had 1,329,103 total population, and 918,564 were Muslims; Gujranwala had 912,234 total population, of whom 642,706 were Muslims and; Gurdaspur had 1,152,511 total population, out of

which 589,923 were Muslims. Even in Nankana Sahib Tehsil, the Muslim population was 74.3 percent (Spate, 1948, p. 10).

Muslim League rejected these claims on the basis of “other factors” and proclaimed that contiguous majority area is the only factor to determine the boundary. According to Mian Mumtaz Daultana “the Sikhs say they have enriched Lyallpur. But we (the Muslims) have given shape and meaning to every corner of India. May we not with more reason to claim the whole of India than yield a part of the Sikh?” (Zaidi, 2000, pp. 408-409).

The arguments of different political parties before the Punjab Boundary Commission were finished on 31 July 1947. Members of the Commission signed their reports in the next few days. Following the closure of the Public sittings, record of all the proceedings and material were submitted to Radcliffe office in Delhi for examination (Hudson, 1985, p. 347). As a result of disagreement even in the last meeting at the Services Club in Simla, both Muslim League and Congress authorized Radcliffe to give his award who concluded his work in India within 31 days by finalizing the Awards for Bengal on 9 August and for Punjab on 11 August. These awards reached the Viceroy’s office on 13th August, locked inside the red leather Viceregal dispatch boxes. The Viceroy announced the Awards on August 16th and made them public on 17th August when Radcliffe had left India after destroying his notes and drafts related to the Boundary Commission (Gupta, 2002, p. 24).

The three communities rejected the Awards because their delayed announcement aroused different controversies. The Sikhs put responsibility on Muslim League for this division plan while in reality Mountbatten gave official cover to the partition scheme of Punjab and Bengal which was later followed by Congress. The Sikhs saw the Award much worse than they could ever imagine. They regretted the loss of their holy shrines, valuable lands, canals and

homes in the rich and fertile rural west Punjab. They regarded the partition of the two provinces as British punishment for their revolutionary spirit (Rai, 1986, p. 278). Interestingly, they did not hold them accountable and had not targeted any British officers. Instead they attributed the partition primarily to the Muslims. As per their prior commitment, the three major parties (Muslim League, Congress, and the Akalis) agreed to adhere to the predetermined partition line between the two Punjabs.

The Awards were perceived differently from the different communities and produced divergent and mixed response. The Muslim League characterized it as ‘territorial murder’ and deceit against Pakistan through an unjust Award. Sardar Baldev held similar views regarding the Award and showed resentment to it. To him, the only viable solution to the Award was a large-scale transfer of population. Sardar Patel also proposed the transfer of population on large scale (Saadullah, 1993, pp. 271-272). The Sikhs were deeply wounded by the implications of the partition of Punjab. The Awards shattered their high hopes and expectations. The Akali Leaders expressed their dissatisfaction and termed the Award unjust and exhorted their co-religionists to “vindicate the honor of the Panth” (Moon, 1961, p. 281). The stressing of top leaders of Sikh to wage a war against Muslims was alarming. After publication of the Awards, worst Muslim-Sikh riots began. It was impossible to find out that “who fired the first shot” (Majumdar, 1976, p. 287).

The most severe impact of the Award was felt in Gurdaspur District where the Muslim-majority Tehsils of Gurdaspur and Batala along with the tehsil of Pathankot and a section of Lahore District were taken away from Pakistan and handed over to East Punjab. The Ambala Tehsil in the Amritsar District, which shared borders with Lahore, was completely forgotten. The Tehsils of Zira and Ferozpur with a clear Muslim majority, contiguous to West Punjab

were also awarded to East Punjab. The “other factor” fully supported the Sikhs and East Punjab, however, no single non-Muslim majority area was given to West Punjab based on these criteria (The Pakistan Times, 1947). The “other factors” just worked in favor of India. For example, the Muslim majority areas got supplies of irrigation water from Madhupur headworks in Pathankot Tehsil. Similarly in Ferozpur Tehsil, the Muslim majority areas were irrigated from water of, Hussianiwala headworks. The non-inclusion of these two headworks in the West Punjab was bound to have an adverse effect on the economy of the province (Singh K. , 1992, p. 172).

Gurdaspur was a Muslim majority area and became very important due to its geostrategic location. The only road link to Kashmir was through Gurdaspur which was awarded to India at the last moment and provided India with access to Kashmir (Ali C. M., 1983, p. 297). Although Radcliffe only knew the Sikh factor but Mountbatten and Nehru definitely had Kashmir factor in their minds regarding behind ‘other factors.’

The British officers were so much sympathetic with the Sikhs. They had so much sympathy for the Sikhs and were also in a position to influence Radcliffe. They succeeded in persuading him to change the Award on political grounds and under the pressure of Mountbatten to avoid the impending civil war (Ali C. M., 1983, pp. 217-219). It is because of this reason that the Sikhs blamed the Muslim for the division of their community as well as the loss of their fertile lands. They were perturbed by the question that Hindus got Hindustan; Muslims got Pakistan, what we got? (Singh K. , 1992, p. 38), and believed that Muslims obstructed them to establish Khalistan as an independent Sikh state. They did not realize that the Muslim had lost population also and that their land and holy places were also divided as a result of the partition of Punjab and Bengal. The Muslims faced a division in two provinces. The main aims of the Sikhs

were to eliminate the Muslim from the Sikh belt along the eastern border of East Punjab and the establishment of the sovereign Sikh state from Jamna to Chenab (WPG, 1948, p. 5). Therefore, the first reason of Sikh anger against Muslim was to take revenge and to ensure the survival and integrity of their Sikh community.

The Sikh soldiers started clearing Eastern Punjab from the Muslim and they often led Sikh Jathas which were supported by high-level leadership that resulted in killing of hundreds on daily basis while compelling thousands others to migrate westward by burning Muslim villages and homesteads. The communal riots immediately spread in Lahore, Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Multan and Sheikhupra. Almost 500,000 people got massacred while 12 million People had to leave their homes (Sohail, 1991, p. 88) and almost 7 million refugees crossed into Pakistan from India for rehabilitation (Wolpert, 2006, p. 179).

The leaders of Akali Dal were Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Udham Singh Nagoke, and few others. It was reported that Master Tara Singh collected a sum of 150, 000 in a week time during his tour from Rawalpindi to Calcutta (Haq, 1970, p. 166). He also collected arms through the Sikh Army officers which he dumped in the Gurdwaras and the princely Sikh states (Kapur, 1985, p. 126). S. Waryam Singh of District Gurdaspur collected a sum of 20,000 for organizing Shahidi Jatha (Punjab Police Secret Abstrat of Intelligence, 1947, p. 387). The whole society of East Punjab was shattered in a planned and organized manner (Zia-ul-Islam, 1948, p. 27).

Many princely Sikh states were also involved in the ethnic cleansing process in East Punjab. The rulers of certain Sikh states permitted their Sikh subjects to carry firearms without license. Secret wireless transmitters were also installed in a number of important Gurdwaras (Haq, 1970, p. 166). S. E. Abbot, Private Secretary to the Governor of the Punjab,

disclosed that Sikhs are determined to be offensive against Muslim where they are in majority while the Sikh states are involved in supplying arms and ammunition as well as explosives to the soldiers. Kapurtala state has provided funds and shelter to Sikh refugees (Mansregh, 1982, p. 942). The states of Patiala and Kapurtala provided refuge to the Sikh Jathas to raid across the state border. Faridkot state authorities have supplied arms and trained 50 Sikh volunteers in the use of fire arms (Punjab Police Secret Abstrat of Intelligence, 1947, p. 413). The Maharaja of Patiala who presented idea of half of Punjab to the Sikhs, organized a campaign with the help of Maharaja of Patiala, Maharaja of Nabha and the Raja of Faridkot for the genocide of the Muslims which resulted in the extermination of Muslim population in the Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, and Kapurtala (Kapur, 1985, p. 126). Thus the Sikh princely states due to their strategic location and with huge Sikh populations became main centers of communal riots in Punjab and their support for a Separate Sikh state (Haq, 1970, p. 419).

According to the Census of 1941, Patiala had 436,539 Muslims, Nabha had 70,373 Muslims, Jind had 50,972 Muslims, Faridkot had 61,352 Muslims, and Kapurtala had 213,754 Muslims. In Kapurtala, Muslims formed 56.5 percent of the total population. At the end of 1947, there was not a single Muslim left there (Zaidi, 2000, p. 154). In Patiala, the number of Muslims liquidated was about 250,000 and in Nabha 50,000. From Punjab, the campaign of Muslim extermination gradually spread to the other areas of Hindu states of Bharatpur, Alwar, Gwalior, United Provinces, Meerut, Saharanpur and finally to Delhi (Haq, 1970, pp. 169-171). In this whole situation, the government seemed helpless and powerless in dealing with the armed Sikhs and Hindu fundamentalist organizations (Hassan, 2006, p. 23).

Liaquat Ali Khan communicated to British Prime Minister Lord Attlee his

apprehension about Sikh strategy on 10 September 1947 which entailed concentrating the Sikh population in East Punjab. The objective was to lay claim to the formation of a Sikh State adjoining the Sikh States of Patiala, Faridkot, and others. Sir Zafrullah accused Mountbatten for being aware of the Sikh plan through confidential reports from the Government of the Punjab. It clearly indicates the Sikh plan of destruction and ethnic cleansing in Punjab but no action was taken by the authorities to curtail their powers. Mountbatten was of the opinion that his failure to pacify the Sikhs was due to the fact that he had no effective political leadership (Wainwright, 1970, p. 121).

The delay in announcement of the Award was the most important reason for communal riots. The late announcement was a tragedy that took place and cost extra Punjabi lives (Quraishi, 1995, p. 547). Mountbatten saw advantages in the postponement for British interests at the expense of the Punjabis. As administratively, there were considerable advantages in immediate publication, as it would have allowed the new boundaries to come into effect from August 15 but the postponement had avoided the inevitable odium react upon the British (Mansregh, 1982, p. 760).

By taking precautionary steps, Mountbatten could have avoided the serious effect of the communal madness and the refugees from fleeing as he was responsible for the maintenance of law and order and was armed with vast power. Once partition was decided, the communal frenzy was easy to control by announcing the partition afterwards. Some of Mountbatten steps contributed in escalating the communal riots, for example, the hasty process of the partition and the division of Punjab which could have been delayed for some time. His emphasis on the division of Punjab without getting the approval from the British government was another reason. A proper planned migration could have avoided massacre (Ziegler, 2001, pp.

438-439). The Punjab tragedy could have been avoided if the partition had been delayed for a year or so.

The Awards multiplied the difficulties as communal hatred had already fueled the situation and resulted in a large scale massacre. Further outcome was migration and the refugee problem. The communal violence continued in the whole month of August and September 1947. Huge number of Muslims lost their lives at the hands of Hindus and Sikhs. Countless people were forced out of their homes and had to seek refuge on the other side of the divide (Zaidi, 2000, p. 457). It was a preplanned and systematic slaughter. Mountbatten and Punjab government had plenty of warnings about the intentions of Sikhs. The only way of restoring peace was to quickly arrest those who were murdering Muslims but no preparations were made for coping with the violence. Even Mountbatten and Auchinleck were aware of the Sikh plan of driving the Muslims out of the East Punjab, but no action was taken for the safety of the Muslims (Zaidi, 2000, p. 457).

In the face of Sikh aggression, the Muslims of Punjab suffered terribly. Every district, every town and every village became the hot bed of inhuman brutalities and massacres of Muslims. The Akalis and extremist Sikhs also attacked the trains with swords and blades near Amritsar when it was heading to Pakistan. The train loaded with dead bodies reached Pakistan which created anger against Hindus and Sikhs of West Punjab. Massive migration took place within a short span of three months from the middle of August to the mid of November (Moon, 1961, p. 268).

The Times (London) disclosed that violence has been orchestrated from the highest levels of Sikh leadership and conducted systematically sector by sector. Some major towns like Amritsar and Jullundur are now quieter, because there is no Muslim left (Punjab, 1947). The slaughter in the East was worst

because the Sikhs were better armed and better organized (Punjab, The Times, 1947).

Jinnah requested Mountbatten to crush the violence ruthlessly in Lahore and Amritsar without any discrimination of Muslim and non-Muslim, and claimed indifference to the shooting of Muslims or not, but wanted the stoppage of riots. The Akali Leaders on the other hand favored the exchange of population after the riots in Noakhali, Punjab and other areas. Swaran Singh, the Leader of the Panthic Assembly Party stated that 'the transfer of population was the only solution which would be the ultimate goal of both Pakistan and Hindustan (Civil and Military Gazette, 1947). The Indian ministry of Information and Broadcasting released the following estimate of migration of people in 1948. It has been estimated that over 12 ½ million people were uprooted from their settled homes. Approximately 5.5 million non-Muslims were estimated to have migrated to India from East Punjab and other provinces of Western Pakistan till 15 June 1948. About 5.8 million Muslims were relocated to Pakistan from East Punjab (Kamra, 2002, pp. 314-316). Chandulal Trivedi, the Governor of East Punjab disclosed that not a single Muslim had been left in Jullundur Division and Ambala Division (The Light, 1947). History had never experienced this kind of migration before where people exchanged their homes and countries so quickly. Both governments were not prepared for the situation (Butalia, 1999, p. 3).

Migration brought in its wake a sense of hopelessness, emotional trauma of displacement and broken identities (Talbot, 1995, p. 37). After partition, the Punjabi identity seemed to vanish. In West Punjab, they embraced Pakistani nationality while in East Punjab; they identified themselves as Hindus and Sikhs but not as Punjabis (Puri, 1985, p. 54). The large amount of migration reshaped the provinces because of exchange of population and communal riots.

The Sikhs after siding with Congress and Hindus have become a minority in the new state

of India while the Hindus remained in majority. The Sikhs had to start their struggle for an equal status from the scratch. Jinnah had clearly predicted in 1947 that once the Hindus establish themselves securely, they may eventually direct their animosity toward the Sikhs, leading to their gradual loss of significance and influence as a distinct community. The Sikhs would find themselves in a vulnerable position and by the time they realize, it would be too late (Ispahani, 1959, p. 219).

CONCLUSION

There is no denying the fact that the Sikhs had contributed to the development of Punjab and that they were peacefully observing their faith and practicing their religion. However, the fact is that on account of their antagonism with the Mughal rulers, they started perceiving all the Muslims as their enemies and therefore, they wanted to avenge the deaths of their Gurus, killed by the Mughal kings from the Muslims and to throw the yoke of their dominance which led them to opt the wrong path by allying themselves with the Hindus. The Hindu nationalist parleyed with Viceroy and won Hindustan for themselves with East Punjab but the treatment meted out to them despite same religious pattern proved Jinnah right in his prediction of the future. Both Hindus and Muslims succeeded in achieving separate homelands but the Sikhs subjected themselves to the dominance of Hindus by taking one wrong decision. They sharpened their weapons against the Muslims over a perceived dominance.

At the time of partition if the Sikh would have demanded a separate state in lieu for separate areas to be extracted from Pakistan and India, they might have succeeded as they were the favorites of British on the grounds of Martial race and economy runner. Nevertheless, they ignored all other possibilities and instead joined India without realizing that Punjab would be divided between Pakistan and India. They could easily achieve Khalistan at the behest of

British favors and sympathies but they wasted the opportunity and put their fate in the hands of the Hindus.

The examination of Sikhs' response to the Radcliffe Award and the Partition of Punjab reveals a rich and intricate tapestry woven with threads of identity, struggle, and resilience. The arbitrary division of Punjab brought forth unprecedented challenges for the Sikh community, forcing them to grapple with displacement, communal violence, and the redefinition of their place in a newly formed socio-political landscape. Despite these adversities, Sikhs exhibited remarkable resilience, contributing to the cultural, economic, and political development of both India and the global Sikh diaspora. The evolving relationship between Sikhs and the Indian state, marked by demands for autonomy and recognition, underscores the enduring impact of this historical period. Through the lens of identity, the Sikh experience during the partition emerges as a testament to their ability to navigate adversity, adapt, and contribute meaningfully to the diverse mosaic of South Asian history. A definite truth is that the Radcliffe Award indeed stripped away the Punjabi identity from the three communities in Punjab.

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