

TERRORISM IN PUNJAB

Understanding Grassroots Reality

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Preface

Much has been written about the decade of terror and violence in Punjab. But the people's view of the "fighters for Khalistan", what the common people observed and experienced in their village situations remained out of focus. This study presents a picture of this more or less ignored aspect of ground reality. Nothing more. The findings may be startling to many. The ground reality was different from the social construction of the struggle by the political elite, the definition given to it by the Government of India and the interpretations by academics attuned to value distance from the people. This may hopefully encourage greater respect for field studies with a view to understanding a complex social phenomenon.

The study would have been impossible without the cooperation of a large number of people. We would wish to place on record our gratitude to over 400 people in the 28 villages of our study who sat with us in groups for hours to share with us what they knew, felt and observed. It may not be possible to thank them by name. Yet a few of those who were extremely helpful in establishing our bonafides and rapport with the people in these villages must be mentioned. These were Dalbir Singh Bal, Dalbir Singh Cheema, Hardev Singh, Jagwinder Singh Gill, Mahal Singh, Malkinder Singh, Rajbir Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Surinder Singh, Gyani Gurdip Singh and Brijesh Sharma. We are grateful to them.

Rita Chaudhry, Amrik Singh, Sarabjit Singh and Harbir Singh offered comments on the first draft. We are thankful to them. Thanks are also due to the friends and scholars who made observations and comments on our presentations of the findings at different seminars and lectures. We must also thank Vijay Kumar for typing and retyping the drafts of the manuscript. And finally we express our gratitude to Shri Narendra Kumar, Chairman, Har-Anand publications for his abiding interest in bringing out the book in its present form.

It may be appropriate, however, to state that we take full responsibility for presenting, as objectively as possible, the information and views our respondents shared with us.

Harish K. Puri
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Introduction

The ground reality of the Khalistan terrorist movement was very different from the social construction of that movement by its leaders and academics on the one hand and by the Government of India, on the other. So believed the researchers of this study because of the fact of living close to the field of operation and our interaction with students from the rural areas of the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur on a regular basis during the period of terrorist violence in Punjab. Exploration at the village level seemed imperative if one wanted to have a closer look at the reality. The present study was planned with a view to seek answers to a number of questions. To what extent were the projected idealistic motives and goals operative? How far did the grievances and notions of justice and independence for the Sikh community relate to the plans and actions of the fighters? What was the general profile of the fighters? What were their social and political objectives and norms of behaviour? Was religion a core concern of the fighters? In what manner did the people relate themselves to the struggle? How far was it a struggle of the unemployed educated youth? Could the movement be described in essence as an expression of a democratic will of the people through violent means? What was the experience of the common people in the villages during the period of terrorist violence and counter terrorism by the security forces? What was the character of resistance of the people against the movement? Why did it collapse so suddenly? What impact has it left in the villages?

The value of theories of political violence and terrorism in understanding, analysing and examining such a phenomenon is axiomatic. A multitude of scholarly studies of Punjab crisis, based on diverse explanatory frameworks are available. But most of these are built on secondary sources and cast in the

mould of a favoured framework for explaining "ethnic conflict". A brief review of the existing literature underlines significant insights and approaches for understanding questions centred around what, how and why of the specific phenomenon. A few of these covered the profiles and the patterns of thinking of the actors, and the worldview that determined their assumed roles and actions. What these studies lacked, however, is a field-view of "terrorism"—the local village context of its internal logic and the perceptions of villagers: the victims and the non-victims, and the constant, close observers of the unfolding drama. Though the achievement of Khalistan as the objective of the armed struggle was announced in April 1986—following which several organisations with the name of Khalistan, such as Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK), Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), Khalistan Armed Force (KAF) were created — it is generally believed that the terrorist violence was motivated by that purpose from the beginning. In a recent confessional review of the Khalistan struggle, Daljit Singh (Bittoo), the then head of (a faction of) the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), observed that Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale had been articulating the urge for "independence of the Sikh nation . . . from the beginning".¹

By the end of 1992, over 25,000 people were estimated to have been killed in the terrorist and counter-terrorist violence in Punjab. The reported annual toll rose menacingly from 598 during 1986 to 3,788 in 1990, 4,768 in 1991, and came down marginally to 3,629 during 1992.² The killings were accompanied by large scale, (mostly unreported) kidnappings for ransom, extortions, and cases of molestation and rape of women. A pervasive and consuming sense of fear and helplessness possessed the virile and fun loving people of Punjab in a vicious grip forged by the armed gangs of the 'terrorists' on the one hand and an atrocious, "weak-strong" police composed largely of people of the same community on the other. Ironically, a vast majority of those who paid the heaviest price in terms of loss of life or honour at the hands of the "terrorists" belonged to the Sikh community. But conversely it was also the result of their resistance and

determined support to the state police that most of the "terrorists" were killed or arrested during 1991 and 1992.

Whereas the scale of terrorist activities was wide, the real nerve centre of activity was the rural areas of the state. It is now estimated that more than 700 villages of Punjab had close encounters with terrorist violence. The number of villages seriously affected by it constituted a small proportion. Their number, according to an assessment made by the Punjab police, was 268 from a total of over 12,000 villages (less than 3 per cent). These villages came under 75 of the 245 Police Stations in the state, 70 per cent of these being from the four police districts of Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Batala and Majitha [the universe of our present study] that lie on the border with Pakistan.³

An exploratory field study was conducted during 1994-95 in two areas manifesting broadly dissimilar features. One of these areas in which 45 terrorists operated consisted of two clusters of 10 and 11 villages including two market towns. This covered the villages between Chowk Mehta (headquarter of Sant Bhindranwale's Damdami Taksal) in the north and Beas in the south. Village Butala which constituted the central place of hiding and planning of operations was in the middle of this area. The other area included only one village, Sultanwind, described by many as "mini-Khalistan" during 1988-92. Close to the city of Amritsar, this village enjoyed the dubious distinction of producing 30 active terrorists, one of whom was a member of a Panthic Committee.

The study followed an inductive method. No hypothesis was considered necessary in view of the exploratory nature of the project. The responses to questions raised in one meeting became the source for modification or/and enlargement of the scope of investigation by the conversational interview method. It involved extensive open-ended and unstructured interviews with seven of the terrorists who had surrendered to the police, members of the families of 12 terrorists who had been killed by the police, 13 police officials of different ranks from a constable to an Inspector General of Police including an ASI incharge of an interrogation centre; 5 of the shopkeepers who had been kidnapped for ransom, 10 of those who had been paying regular extortion (protection) money; 8 members of

families which had migrated to nearby towns and had returned to the area in 1993, members of 3 families whose homes had been used as hiding places or transit halts by the terrorists; 4 Sarpanchs (Chiefs) and Panchs (members) of elected village councils and 15 others which included shopkeepers, tractor spare parts dealers, rice sheller owners, chemists/druggists, school and college teachers, retired government officials and farmers.

The focus of this investigation was directed towards gaining an initial understanding of the phenomenon. This included a careful scrutiny of the profiles of individual terrorists, their motivations or/and objectives, their socio-economic background, earlier political orientations, if any, the activities they participated in, their behaviour patterns and the perception of others who were directly or indirectly affected by their activities. The choice regarding who should be interviewed followed leads provided in a sequence of interviews through the snow-ball technique.

The experiences and the findings of the preliminary investigation, later published⁴ became the *raison d'être* of the present field study. Before presenting our plan, the defined areas of study and the methodology employed by us, an overview of the scholarly literature available on the subject is imperative. For this reason, this chapter has been divided into two parts. In the first part the available literature on Punjab crisis has been reviewed; the second part focusses on the plan of investigations and our field experience.

I. Review of Literature

Significant theoretical explanations of the reasons of terrorist violence have been attempted by a number of scholars from Hannah Arendt in her classic *On Violence* (1964) and Thomas Thornton in "Terror As a Weapon of Political Agitations" (1964) to Robert Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (1970), Martha Crenshaw in "The Causes of Terrorism" (1981) and Walter Laqueur in *The Age of Terrorism* (1987).⁵

Whereas Arendt forcefully argued that the acquisition and exercise of power is the principal reason for all kinds of violence including terrorism, riots, revolution and greed based crime, Thornton analysed the distinct reasons and advantages

of terrorist violence in "internal war" situations. Ted Gurr's series of hypotheses related to his major and rather popular "Relative Deprivation" paradigm centered on the subjective or psychological discontent which made individuals and communities amenable to mobilisation for a recourse to violence. Social scientists studying terrorism, broadly following Lacqueurs's definition of terrorism as "the use of covert violence by a group for political ends", regarded it as a part of political strategy or politics by other means.

Walter's *Terror and Resistance* (1969) and Duvall and Stohl's "Governance by Terror" (1988) tended to develop a general theory focussed almost exclusively on "Regime terror". The persuasive argument about seeing terrorism as a "social invention" and a "political choice", advanced the search for a diagnostic explanation of terrorist violence.⁶

In the course of an examination of available explanations, Crenshaw, who focussed mainly on insurgent terrorism, found rationality as the key factor in the choice of the terrorist method. Both the preconditions of the social, political and economic contexts on the one hand and the *precipitant* factors immediately preceding the onset of terrorist violence on the other, required serious consideration in making sense of the phenomenon. However, her conclusion that this may not be the result of mass discontent or deep cleavage in society is particularly insightful. There may be a variety of divergent and variant combinations of factors that contributed to the terrorist violence in a society. Two significant determinants, according to her, were how far a society in its actual life permitted violence and how disaffected were the community's elite who could often successfully arrogate to themselves the power and privilege to make decisions on behalf of the majority.⁷ Juergensmeyer in his recent comparative study of religious terrorism finds that in certain cases the purpose of terrorist violence may not be only strategic but also prominently symbolic in its effect, as for instance, in the bombing of World Trade Centre in USA. Discussing what he describes as "performance violence . . . invoking the idea of theatre" in "religious terrorism," he observes that "they are dramatic shows, but ones that can have a transformative effect on those who commit them and those who are affected by

them, both directly and indirectly". Central to the understanding of such terrorism are the "cultures of violence", the internal logic of convictions, social support and the stamp of approval. There are cultures, "where violence is to some extent a way of life".⁹

Despite meaningful new insights available in contemporary studies, it was felt, as Crenshaw observed, that they were not yet close to a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon of terrorism.

Available Explanations of Terrorist Violence in Punjab

Terrorism in Punjab or "Punjab Crisis" has been the subject of a number of quickly produced journalistic and descriptive studies with a semblance of explanation alluding to multiple factors, such as Tully and Jacob *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle*, and the more analytical, Akbar's *The Siege Within*. Some of the more recent studies — prominent among these being Narayanan's *Tryst with Terror* (1996), Gurpreet Singh's *Terrorism: Punjab's Recurring Nightmare* (1996), *Genesis of Terrorism: An Analytical Study of Punjab Terrorists* by Dang (1988) and K.P.S. Gill's, *Knights of Falsehood* (1997)¹⁰ have focussed on the ground level empirical reality tending to explain what happened and why it so happened. These studies are more or less independent of the theoretical and methodological baggage of a social scientist. It may be appropriate, however, to first review the theoretically oriented explanations by well trained and established social scientists, now available in books, chapters and articles in research journals. Whereas most of these studies take note of multiple interrelated factors, the variations in emphasis and the frameworks of explanation are inevitable. These may be discussed broadly under the following categories.

1. Primacy of Culture/Religion

One of the widely held premises relating to social and political dynamics in South Asia is that contrary to the ideology of secularism, religion is central to all activity in the secular domain.¹¹ Juergensmeyer accordingly viewed the "bloody rebellion on the part of the Sikhs" as "a religious revolt against secular ideology which often accompanies a

modern state".¹² Religious nationalism was to him, in fact, a global phenomenon. What happened in Punjab was part of the pattern. On the "personal level," the militancy and recourse to violence in Punjab was a consequence of heightened tension between faith of religious vision and the lack of faith spawned by the modernist, secular, Western attitude to life. "On the cosmic level", it was "a battle between truth and evil" or a response to the threat posed to the identity and moral vision of the Sikhs.¹³ However, when the absolutism of religion blends with the potency of modern politics, Juergensmeyer warns "the combination can be incendiary".¹⁴ The reasons of "the religious nationalists" are, according to him, available in "the opinions of politically active religious leaders".¹⁵ Therefore according to him the sermons of Sant Bhindranwale offered clues to the "religious sensibilities of the militants and their political implications".¹⁶ Accordingly, the logic of social dynamics reflected in what actually happened and why the 'Sikh militants' were destined to act the way they did, appeared less relevant. An enquiry into how politics happened has been ignored. Therefore what made a particular kind of religious leaders, constituted into more active religio-political roles as against the others did not appear to be important to explanation of the "revolt". Nor does he consider it necessary to draw a distinction between religion as a way of life and religion as an ideology or to examine the socio-historical context in which the latter becomes more legitimate and powerful than religious faith.

Pettigrew, who has been engaged in the study of the social dynamics of Sikh community and its politics since the publication of her highly regarded *Robber Noblemen* 20 years ago, also viewed the upsurge as "an idealistic movement". However, the political practice rooted in social dynamics which was completely at odds with the proclaimed idealism was, to her, a far more potent determinant of their politics. Whereas the 'guerrilla warfare' was, according to her, fuelled by a strong reaction to the state terror and violence, the Jat Sikh values made it only impulsive and controlled by "village rustics" who had local, small time agendas of personal power, vengeance or glamour. Therefore, as she observes, "the Sikh account of their political activities cannot be accorded the

status of an explanation". The politics of the Sikh community responded more to individual interests than the community tradition.¹⁷

Pettigrew took serious note of factionalism as an essential aspect of the patterning of values and tradition among the Jat Sikhs. That is which determined, according to her, the life as it was lived. "Fetishism of culture" was therefore not a reliable approach towards an understanding of political activities of the Sikhs. Accordingly, in her study, *Unheard Voices* based on extended interviews with terrorists of the Khalistan Commando Force, she tried to go beyond the "symbolic universe". The character of the movement and its course of action, as she discovered, was determined by a thriving individualism, family feuds, vendettas and "interest in guns and popularity".¹⁸ Tending to put all the diverse strata into a cast-iron mould she observes that "As a people, Sikhs well deserve Locke's caption 'possessive individualists'. Therefore, by their very nature, the militant organizations rooted in the political culture of rural areas, were found to have "no basis in political ideology"; "their bonding was purely personal" and their activities and linkages had little to do with the act of resistance. Her prescription that to be successful, the "Sikh revolution", had "to free itself of cultural and historical constraints",¹⁹ appeared to conceptualise a fancied history beyond facts.

Since culture is not a given tight mould but a process, the distinction which Clifford Geertz made between "the force" of a cultural pattern and "the scope" determined by the 'range of social contexts'²⁰ is relevant. "The intensity of belief" i.e. the thoroughness with which religion and culture are internalized and come to order behaviour and action may be related to the social and political context. The importance of the "contextual causation" in explaining the Punjab crisis is more clearly the argument in the explanations that follow.

2. Political Economy/ Modernization Breeds Religious/ Cultural Conflict.

Common to the large number of studies under this broad framework is a premise that it is misleading to see the roots of violence in Punjab in religion or culture. The apparently

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religion-driven politics was more a consequence of the crisis created in society by the processes unleashed by modernisation or changes in the economy. To Leaf, it is the souring of the Green Revolution "Song of Hope" ; the turning of the rare "bright moments" in a people's history into a blight,²¹ which is central to the explanation. The reason, according to him, lies in the basic conflict between two alternative patterns of economic development. One being the Indian state's model centered on industrial domination of agriculture and its threatening redistributive agenda and the other, the Sikh community's "pluralist pattern of economic development" outlined in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973. The crisis was created by "the clash between two visions of the future and India's proper political and social constitution".

More pervasive is the argument of the social and political costs born of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist agriculture strategy. A rather simplistic and evidently popular version explained the violence as a consequence of large scale unemployment particularly of the educated youth — "the children of Green revolution". An awareness of these costs had given the early IMF-World Bank priesthood nightmares of a "red revolution" following on the heels of the "green revolution", until they were assured by serious scholars and strategists that in countries like India, it might rather result in manifestly religio-cultural strife than class war.²³

The wages of capitalist agriculture included the accentuation of inequalities as new opportunities only privileged the better endowed section of big farmers. It also led to large scale unemployment spawned by time saving mechanical devices and the exclusion of small and marginal farmers. The increasing economic clout of the rich landlords, sometimes described as *Kulaks*, whetted their appetite for greater share in political power. More so, because centralization of decision-making in a whole range of agricultural operations, trade and pricing of inputs and outputs spelled decreasing returns of the investment. It was therefore argued that in their battle against the Indian State allegedly controlled by the industrial bourgeoisie, these capitalist farmers turned to utilize religious issues for mobilising the poor peasantry around notions of discrimination against the Sikh community.²⁴

In a more comprehensive critique of the dynamics and consequences of the social and political planning underlying the Green Revolution, Vandana Shiva forcefully argues that the new technology aimed at engineering "not just seeds but social relations as well". The inevitable centralisation of control of all agricultural decisions, trade, and prices of goods, according to her, caused both "ecological instability and high vulnerability", leading to unsustainable development. Squeezed by heavy debts and declining returns of investment on the one hand and culturally disoriented by the spread of a degenerative culture on the other, the farmers felt severely victimized. The violence in Punjab was brought by this "technological fix". According to her it is therefore "misleading" to locate its roots in religion.²⁵

Kothari underlined "the disparities of political power" created by the "tacit and open restructuring" which led to the farmers' "sudden loss of control over knowledge". The resulting multidimensional insecurities (which it created) were "the hidden externalities of the 'miracle' of Green Revolution".²⁶ But the larger context was provided by what he described as the "statelessness of the Indian state", the institutional crisis or "a collapse of the state at lower reaches of society".²⁷ The thrust of the explanations in the above framework is that the discontent and the disillusionment generated by socio-economic change created the context in which Sant Bhindranwale's combative rhetoric was able to secure ready supporters and adherents.²⁸

Robin Jeffrey focusses on the peculiar impact which modernization made in Punjab, in the context of the specificity of cultural orientation. The Punjab, as he underlines, had been accustomed to violence for a very long time. Modernization accentuated the stress on the history of victimhood and martyrdom including "invention of tradition" through recent writing of "Rhetorical History". "The yeasty innovations of the past twenty years", which added to the "basic, yet volatile ingredients", helped in the phenomenal upsurge of religious revival and violence.²⁹ The importance of the latter has also been the subject of serious scholarly attention by Sudhir Kakkar (1995) and Veena Das (1992).³⁰ Urbanisation, consumerism, economic differentiation, and

more importantly, the revolution in communication and technical innovations including availability of more lethal weapons, created a heady mix of desperation, religious sanction of violence and striking fire power. Describing it as "the perils of prosperity", Jeffrey underlines "the frightening lessons of Punjab" by stressing that "the ferment of modernization was capable of generating religious revival, ethnic conflict and secession".³¹

3. State Intervention: Contextualising Militant Ethnicity

The central point of this framework was the significance of the post partition choice of the basis of India's unity for explaining the separatist conflicts in the country. The historical impulses for the Sikh militancy have been explained with reference to the denial of "communal safeguards" and centralisation of power. Dipankar Gupta, however, focussed on such intervention made by the Indian state and the ruling Congress party as created the context of "special features of the occasion". These contributed to the development of what he terms the "Ethnic Imago", leading to widespread violence.

The Punjab agitation was according to him pushed into militant ethnicity and violence by the Centre, by "the cynical political manipulation" by the Congress. Arguing against the "primacy of cultural logic", he posits the crucial third dimension of state and the ruling Congress, to the 'dyad' of the Sikh ethnic self and the "other", advancing what he described as "a triadic framework".³² It was the role of the third dimension which created the context in which the particular Sikh response could be adequately explained. What happened was not a "structural inevitability" - an argument which appeared to have been advanced or supported by Madan, Juergensmeyer, Leaf, Kakkar and Das on the one hand and Shiva on the other. But, as against their arguments, central to Gupta's explanation was the context of the state's political prescriptions and pursuits—the failure of three attempts at negotiated settlement; the operations "Blue Star" and "Wood Rose", the massacre of the Sikhs in 1984 and the failure to utilise the opportunity offered by "Operation Black Thunder" in 1988 — which determined the particular kind of response.³³

Puri and Gandhi on the other hand, refer to the presence in Sikh politics of two competing tendencies - of the secular democratic for legitimacy of the struggle for economic and political power in Indian polity and the religio-cultural (or communal) rhetoric for popular religious support in confronting the "other". The nature of intervention made by the state is regarded as a crucial factor in frustrating and foreclosing one kind of response and facilitating or provoking the other.³⁴

4. Instrumentalist Framework: Manipulation by Political Elite

Rejecting both the primacy of culture paradigm and the economic explanation as inadequate, the framework associated with Brass tends to explain the crisis with reference to ideologies and strategies devised at the top and the role played by the political entrepreneurs in pursuit of their power interests. These include both the ruthless, unprincipled intervention by the Centre under Indira Gandhi leading to oppressive centralisation of power in Union-state relations, and the sheer opportunism of the Akali and the other Sikh political elite.³⁵ A partisan version of such explanations comes from Punjab's Director General of Police KPS Gill.³⁶ He attributes the rise of terrorism exclusively to the 40 year long machinations and political propaganda feeding the Sikh community on a diet of mythical suffering, victimization, construction of the malevolent "other" and also of a ghetto mentality. The legendary belief in the divinely ordained destiny of the Khalsa to subdue the adversary by arms and enjoy sovereign power added, according to Gill, further justification for violence. But the terrorists had their own agendas. They could be dealt with only by a superior state force. Gill predictably glossed over the socio-historical framework of the conflict and terrorism by the state and its consequences.

The instrumental view tends to give an impression of over-emphasis on the machinations of political leaders as if the mass of followers is always gullible.³⁷ The crucial question, however, related to the definition given to the existing situation and the choices which decision makers at the Centre and from

within the community made from the options available on particular occasions.³⁸

A significant question is raised by Subrata Mitra: "Why do the explanations of the rise of the Sikh militancy have little to do with the causes of its decline"?³⁹ It seeks an answer. Because no significant change had been noticed in relation to the variety of reasons and causes of its rise highlighted by the ideologues, academics and intellectuals. No wonder that in the recent confessional review of the movement, one of the ideologues explains the decline in terms of ideological weaknesses, political immaturity of the leadership and the logic of the gun.⁴⁰ To Pettigrew, as discussed earlier it is a problem of "discrepancy" between ideals and practice. The movement was defeated not by the use of extraordinary power by the state, but precisely "by the features of traditional rural society".⁴¹ It may be worth examining, however, how far the features of the social dynamics go into the conceptualisation of the very ideals and idealism by the leaders and ideologues. Gill's portrayal of the leaders and actors as "Knights of Falsehood" may be described as partisan. It could as well be taken as a provocation to the scholars as well as leaders of the movement to rethink such ideas and ideals which he describes as "falsehood" in terms of their dialectical relationship with such traditions.

A few of the writings based on observation or interviews with the terrorists and the common people pointed towards the ground reality. One of these is Satya Pal Dang's above mentioned early publication which directs attention to the dubious role of the Congress and the Akali leaderships, and the profiles of a number of terrorists, exposing the lie about their idealism.⁴²

Gurpreet Singh's reportage of his interviews with a large number of terrorists and members of their families, in *Terrorism: Punjab's Recurring Nightmare* provides a measure to examine Gill's (police) version of their motivation and actual behaviour pattern. The report tends to underline the particular features of Jat Sikh society — "natural pride", assertion of the macho image and the motivations of the terrorists. The context for terrorism, as he observes, was created by a combination of socio-economic and political features "which brought about a

broad consensus that the situation warranted use of violence".⁴³ The link between the rise and decline of terrorist violence may be related to the rise and fall of such a consensus.

V.N. Narayanan, one of the most sensitive observers of the scene during the whole period concludes that "the violence was more of the criminal and law and order variety than a programme of murder based on ideology and a clearly perceived cause".⁴⁴ The failure of the media in resisting the blackmail by the terrorists and thus becoming their unwilling tool is another dimension that contributed to the escalation of fear and violence.⁴⁵

The prominent tendency among the academics has been to explain the militancy and violence in Punjab in terms of "crisis of governance", "Sikh identity", wages of Green Revolution, or a religious revolt against the secular state. But the people in the field saw things differently. In fact many viewed that the surmises of the experts and their academic jargon had contributed to confusion in the understanding of reality. A major part of the reason lay perhaps in their distance from the field both in physical and metaphoric terms.

II. THE SCOPE AND METHOD OF STUDY

The present study was planned following the field experience during a preliminary exploration in two different areas in 1994-95.

It included collection of data and observations of the people in each selected village on the following variables with regard only or mainly to their own villages:

- i) identification and listing of the *mundas* (boys) who joined the movement and took to terrorism;
- ii) the socio-economic and demographic background, traits, behaviour patterns, religious and political orientation/ affiliation of the "boys" and the perceived reasons/impulses for joining;
- iii) the variety of actions launched in the village;
- iv) the targets and victims;
- v) the extent and character of migration from the village;
- vi) the related context of caste/community structure and social dynamics;

- vii) the actions and conduct of the police/other security forces in the village during the period and
- viii) the cases of individual or group resistance against the terrorists and/or the police and the character of armed or passive resistance.

The thrust of our investigation has been to discover whether and how far one can establish a relationship between the Sikh ideological discourse and the mode of terrorist activities? Was there a congruence between the ideology of Khalistan as articulated by the leaders and intellectuals and the motivation, traits and actions of the terrorists? It was assumed that if that was the case a terrorist action could be logico-meaningfully connected with the objective of realisation of Khalistan. The purpose was to understand terrorism as a process. Evidently what we were now looking for was not the police version. Nor was it the views and information available from the ideologues of Khalistan, but a more immediate view from the grassroots level. The source of our data and other information about the terrorists from the selected villages as well as the activities of the terrorists and of the police would be the people of those particular villages who had witnessed the history in its making. The process began by identifying certain key variables in the examination of reality at the grassroots level. For example, it was an *a priori* explanation in the dominant political discourse that the Punjab problem was a consequence of "the large scale unemployment of educated youth". The hypothesis needed substantiation.

As a corollary to the above, the knowledge of socio-economic and demographic background of the terrorists became essential. In fact, it was necessary to examine as far as possible all the dimensions of the lives of the terrorists who belonged to the area of investigation. This covered a wide range of their reasons for joining the movement, their age at the time of joining, the time span from the moment they were recruited to the day they died or surrendered to the police, their economic position, political affiliations, and ideology.

Since religion assumed the centre stage in the social and political affairs of Punjab the problem was generally perceived as a "Sikh problem". The notion of Khalistan, theoretically

speaking, excluded those who were not part of the Khalsa identity, and the target of attack was assumed to be the "other" community. Whether or not this was the case, the general perception was based on such assumptions. Hence it called for an investigation of the orientation of the terrorists, the religious underpinning of their activities; the religious identification of those who became the targets of the terrorists' attacks including those who left the villages and migrated to safer places. The examination required the assessment of the extent of the migrations forced by diverse terrorist activities, the socio-economic analysis of those who were harrassed, kidnapped or killed by the terrorists in the area of our study. Given the newspaper reports as well as the official propaganda about cases of rape, we felt compelled to probe the occurrence of such cases, including the social background of the victims. Still another significant dimension was an inquiry into the sale and purchase of land, shops and houses of terrorist-affected people.

It has been observed that culture plays a significant role in influencing the direction of a movement. The underlying assumption is that there is a dialectical relationship between the social structure and a movement. To what an extent did the social and cultural formations appear to have influenced the terrorist movement in Punjab? This could be a guide to probing the theory and practice of militancy. In this regard, the caste background of those who joined terrorism, the disputes about land ownership or/and inter-family enmity were relevant issues for examination. These could be pointers to the range and depth of support and/or opposition to the movement among the Sikh masses. We also took into account those cases where the individuals/families in the villages organised and armed themselves and stood up against the terrorists, whether as a result of their ideological opposition to religion based or theocratic separatism as in the case of the communists or because of a spontaneous sense of affront to their dignity.

Finally, the reaction of the Indian state constituted an important aspect of the study. How did the state agencies handle or deal with militancy and terrorism in Punjab? The

police, para-military forces such as CRPF and BSF, and even the army were deployed on a massive scale and armed with extraordinary power. "Operation Bluestar" in 1984 was an action of the army; "Operation Black Thunder" in 1988 was mainly an operation conducted by the state police force. The encounters between the terrorists and the police, real or false, constituted an element in the examination of the state reaction. Similarly, the general conduct of the police with regard to village people during raids in the villages, their treatment of the suspects and the detenues and the alleged extortion for bribes etc. required an investigation.

In the light of these parameters of inquiry, it was necessary to work out comprehensive and workable methods for data collection. The first task—by no means easy—was to identify the area of investigation. There was hardly any district which remained untouched by militancy. In fact, it extended beyond Punjab in India and even to parts of the outside world. The migration of the Sikhs to various parts of the world, particularly the Western capitalist countries, provided the necessary climate for terrorism in Punjab to acquire international proportions. The bombing of Kanishka, an Air India aeroplane, was one of the instances of its becoming international in scope. Our focus had to be on the villages of Punjab. Among these there was a wide variation in the intensity and duration of terrorism. Selection of the area and of villages within the area was essential. It had to be manageable in the context of the time available for the investigation and the resource constraint aggravated by the absence of any institutional financial assistance.

Being located at Amritsar many of us were personal witnesses to the movement. Nobody can deny the centrality of Amritsar in the affairs of the Sikh community. In any case, the selection of Amritsar district would have been a natural choice because no other district of Punjab witnessed such a sustained and severe turbulence from 1978 to 1992. The revenue and administrative district of Amritsar consisted of three police districts, viz. Amritsar, Majitha and Tarn Taran. The northern parts of Ferozepur district, and the Batala region of Gurdaspur district also remained disturbed throughout this period. We decided to confine our study to the 3 police

districts of Amritsar and the Batala police district area of Gurdaspur.

The next step was to identify the villages for the field study and data collection. It seemed reasonable to select seven villages from each police district. However, the selection of villages was the most difficult part of the entire process. The various sampling techniques in social sciences which are considered effective and useful to maintain objectivity in research were examined. However, our initial investigations, revealed endless variations among the villages. There were some villages in which large numbers of persons had taken to terrorism; some others produced none. Some villages remained outside the periphery of terrorist action. In a few villages, there was armed resistance and people had fought against the terrorists. A list of variables included the following:

- (1) A considerable number of terrorists
- (2) A large number of killings of the people of the village by terrorists.
- (3) Numerous police raids, killings and investigations.
- (4) Noticeable encounters between the police and the terrorists.
- (5) A considerable number of migrations from the village.
- (6) Resistance to terrorists.
- (7) A village noticed as a prominent hotbed of terrorism during the period.
- (8) Certain urban or semi urban areas considered significant on the above counts.

A list of villages identified by the number of variables was prepared. It was decided to initially select nine villages from each of the 4 police districts in view of the representation of the above variables. This was done in anticipation of the possible reluctance of the people from a particular village to provide the required level of information. In fact, this methodological consideration proved to be right. It was found that in the absence of meaningful informal contact or building of some rapport in a particular village we were treated with suspicion. The listed villages from where the information was finally collected are included in Table I alongwith the population of each village according to 1991 Census.

Table I : List of the selected villages with Population according to the police district.

S.No.	Police District	Village Selected	Population Size according to 1991 Census
1. Amritsar			
(i)		Basarke	2324
(ii)		Harsha Chhina	5239
(iii)		Jheeta Kalan	4076
(iv)		Miran Kot	3339
(v)		Thande	1751
(vi)	Urban Area	Sultan Wind	Not available
(vii)	"	Wadali Guru	Not available
2. Majitha			
(i)		Butala*	2242
(ii)		Rajpura*	1909
(iii)		Narangpur*	875
(iv)		Kammoke*	1301
(v)		Kaleke	2263
(vi)		Mattewal	2276
(vii)		Sathiala	7243
(viii)		Sehnsra	4008
(ix)		Vadala Kalan	4197
(x)		Vadala Veerum	3869
3. Tarn Taran			
(i)		Bagrian	2480
(ii)		Gharyala	6447
(iii)		Mianwind	1988
(iv)		Naushera Pannuan	
(v)		Rataul	2791
(vi)		Sur Singh	8491
(vii)	Urban Area	Bikhiwind	Not available
4. Batala			
(i)		Butter Kalan	1397
(ii)		Cheema Khudi	2539

S.No.	Police District	Village Selected	Population Size according to 1991 Census
		Dayalgarh	2093
(iii)		Ghasitpur	1193
(iv)		Kashtiwali	1261
(v)		Khojala	2309
(vi)		Uchoke**	
(vii)		(popularly known as Udhoke)	2544

* All these four villages have been treated as one village, viz. Butala.

** Actually, the village falls under Majitha police district, but owing to its closeness with the Batala police district, it has been included here.

In fact, Butala was not the only village as shown in Table I in the case of which a cluster of villages was subsumed. There were other villages also where such conditions were prevalent. Harsha Chhina contains a large number of villages, viz., Ucha Kila, Nichla Kila, Sabaj Pur, Varnala and Kukranwali which had moved from Harsha Chhina to form five hamlets. Similarly, Naushera Pannuan has Chaudhariwala as a contiguous village. Basarke and Bhaini, as well as Mianwind and Jabandpur are twin villages. For the study, the events and other issues which were examined assumed the existence of such villages as one, since the boundaries were absent. Furthermore, some of the villages, such as Vadala Kalan, Sathiala and Sur Singh had a large number of hamlets without any nomenclature. Such expansions of various villages are a phenomenon of the agrarian dynamics. Following the Green Revolution many landowners in Punjab have moved out to their farms to establish farm-houses known as *deras*. In certain cases this phenomenon had started earlier giving birth to new villages. These *deras* had distinct experiences of terrorism in comparison with the villages.

There was one common feature of the villages selected for the study. All the villages have two prominent castes, viz., Jats and Mazhbis. Both are essentially Sikhs. The only exceptions were that of Kashtiwali and Dayalgarh where the

people of that caste group are Christians. Basarke has a numerical preponderance of Kumhars but combined with Bhaini the Jats and Mazhbis dominate. A numerical preponderance of the two castes in the villages selected for the study has been found to be a common feature of the villages in Amritsar district and the Batala region of Gurdaspur district. In a way, such a combination was one aspect of terrorism in this area. The relationship between the Jats and the Mazhbis was not a simple economic equation of the landowner and the landless cultivator/labourer but had cultural features of relationship. Under the *jajmani* system, the Jat and the Mazhbi formed a traditionally durable relationship. The Mazhbi generally demonstrated intense loyalty to his landowner to the extent of sharing his friends and foes.

After the selection of villages, the final step was to collect information. For this purpose an interview schedule was constructed. However, the schedule was prepared not with a view to conduct interviews of either the terrorists or the individuals belonging to these villages. An empirical examination of a social process such as a movement or terrorism has always been problematic. In a majority of empirical studies the standard pattern is to interview the participants in the movement. In the present study this was not feasible. Most of the terrorists were dead. (We had interviewed surrendered terrorists for the preceding exploratory study and discovered that later day rationalisation had gone into shaping their responses). In any case given our objective, we were looking for the village view of terrorism. Separate interviews with a representative number of people in the village were also not suitable to our purpose. We wanted quantitative and verifiable information, not the subjective views and opinions of particular people. For us the village was to be taken as a microcosm, treating all occurrences and events as data to be collected.

Keeping in mind these issues and problems, we decided to construct a village schedule covering comprehensive information about the village in general and terrorism in particular. Subsequently, we visited 28 villages; a few of them were clusters of several villages. To fill up the village schedule

from each village, a number of visits were made which varied from two to five. One visit invariably meant one day in most of the cases. Some of the villages to which three to five visits were considered essential were Butala, Sathiala, and Sur Singh. Altogether, it involved 85 full days of field work by our team.

Persuading the people to talk and discuss was a formidable task in practically all the villages. More so because for authenticity and on the spot cross checking and correction, we had decided to discuss matters in diverse public gatherings of people. It took us a considerable time to win their confidence. This required winning of contact persons in a particular village through our colleagues and students. Our work in a University which has been catering to the needs of the region since 1969 proved to be useful. The mode of interaction and collection of information involved gatherings of a number of people at one place and asking them questions. The size of the group of informants varied from six to thirty two. In a village Thande, for example, thirty two persons gathered to answer our queries and discuss what they wanted to for over 3 hours. However, in order to check the authenticity of the information provided in a village, another group of people was interviewed in a separate meeting. Such cross verification often required another visit.

Field Experiences

Generally, field investigation provides a rich experience in meeting different people and encountering social situations hitherto unknown to a researcher. Investigating terrorism, however, puts the researcher in a difficult situation where one may sometimes sense even a threat to one's life. Particularly when, despite the end of terrorism, certain queries could embarrass different kinds of people or conversely, arouse apprehensions of the police. The disappearance of Jaswant Singh Khalra, a Human Rights Activist, may be understood in this context. At that time, he was investigating the unknown and unidentified terrorists killed by the police. We were fortunate that in spite of the questioning looks and body language confronted by us initially in each village, it was possible to gradually develop a rapport with the people.

Visiting various villages was a novel experience in another sense also. We noticed that the villages were distinctly marked by a large number of Gurdwaras. Subsequently, we began to collect information regarding the number of religious places in each village. We found that there were two kinds of Gurdwaras. In some villages there were Gurdwaras which had historical significance. And there was generally one Gurdwara for each *Mohalla*. Since the population was also segregated along the caste lines, it meant that different castes had their own Gurdwaras, called Gurdwaras of Mazbhis or Ramgarhia Gurdwara. The practice seemed to be in apparent defiance of the ideal of equality among the Sikhs. It was further revealing to note that the Sikh respondents were markedly conscious of their caste identities. Invariably the profile of the village was described in terms of the number of families of each caste group. Since most of the respondents were Jats, they were quick to point out the caste background of non-Jat terrorists, something which we considered odd. They would invariably forget initially to mention the terrorists who belonged to the Mazhbi caste. Whenever we tended to make detailed inquiries about the Mazhbi terrorists, the response was invariably cryptic. They would say, "Oh! Jita? yes, he also joined the boys. He did nothing big, he was involved in petty cases of looting". Ajit Singh becoming 'Jita', or reference to some as only *bhangar* or *amli* (addicted to hemp or opium) capable of committing only small crimes became an indicator of the caste prejudice of the dominant Jats.

It may be further mentioned that there seemed to be clearly defined boundaries drawn by the Sikhs with regard to the Hindus, particularly those who belonged to the upper castes. While examining the forced migration of the Hindus during terrorism, it was found that the categories 'we' and 'they' existed in quite a noticeable form. All the upper caste Hindus were mentioned as *Bahman* (Brahmins). Among the various Hindu castes in our villages, Brahmins were in a majority. However, we noticed that it also reflected a certain disinterestedness about 'they', when the Hindus were clubbed as Brahmins. It required an effort to locate a Hindu migrant in the hierarchy of castes.

Towards the end of terrorism, a lot of information appeared on the moral degeneration of the terrorists particularly in terms of their sexual exploits or the rapes committed by them. We anticipated that the villagers would be disinclined to discuss this aspect of the terrorists' activities. Yet, to our surprise, the respondents offered to give information or confirmed some of the cases without much hesitation. There was no evidence of 'rape' as a tactic of 'revenge' against an adversary. The incidents were viewed as a part of licentious lust. A shared sense of pain and shame marked silences in some cases. Occasionally one or two in the gathering appeared keen to blurt out all they knew. One respondent, for example hurried to explain: "They were eating almonds and drinking (desi) ghee mixed milk; such food had to have some outlet". It is a widely held belief in Punjab that almonds and milk enhance the sexual potency of men. However, a conspicuous hesitation was noticed in giving away the information to another set of questions, related to the sale, purchase, forcible occupation and other transactions of shops, houses and landed property. Such reluctance could be understood in the light of the fact that the respondents were reluctant to tell that they or their own caste men might have conspired with or abetted the terrorists to drive out the hitherto established Hindu businessmen from the village.

In the course of some interviews we could get the opportunity to interview both men and women against the backdrop of family settings. We invariably found women to be better informed and more candid than men about what they thought was the sequence or rationale of an event. A question that we asked ourselves was if women were not closer and keener witnesses of the entire phenomenon? Or was it their deep sense of fear, helplessness and suffering during that period which heightened their perception? It may also be possible that when there was an increase in the cases of violation of women a fear of becoming victims made them more alert.

Finally, we noticed an ambivalent attitude of the people towards both the terrorists and the police. In villages where we sensed a sympathy for the terrorists, the villagers described them as "our boys," and were highly critical of police excesses.

Invariably their criticism exaggerated the extent of the police action and tended to discover a general conspiracy of the Indian state either to kill the Sikhs or to harm their interests. On the contrary, the villages where the families/people confronted the terrorists, (in most of the cases these villages were the strong holds of the Communist parties) the respondents were equally or more critical of the police for its indifference, incompetence, or alleged collusion with the terrorists.

In the end, mention of two caveats may be in order. One, the likelihood of time sequence variation in responses. The study was conducted at a time when the gloom of terrorism or police excesses had passed. We have been reminded that had such a study been attempted between 1988 and 1992 it might have been very difficult to conduct this kind of study or/and that the findings might have been different, not only because of the prevalent fear but also because of the then existing differing perceptions about terrorism among the people.

Notes

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1

Rise of Separatist Violence An Overview

The period of the terrorist violence marked a break and an interregnum in the political history of Punjab. Prior to the upsurge of terrorism, democratic political struggles for social and political causes had constituted an established pattern. An integrationist impulse generally overlapped the Sikh community's preoccupation with a distinct identity. The post 1994 mainstream leadership of the Sikhs asserted, more strongly than earlier, their pre-1983 rejection of separatism and violence. The Akali Dal (B)'s agenda for peace, communal harmony, and regional autonomy was accompanied by commitment to India's national unity and integrity. This agenda received a massive support of the community in successive elections to the SGPC and the Lok Sabha in 1996, the State Assembly in 1997 and the Lok Sabha and the Panchayat elections in 1998. The ascendancy of separatist militancy and violence stretching over a period of a decade or more may therefore be discussed in its specific historical context and setting.

Much has been written to explain the reasons for the rise of terrorism. A review of the literature in the Introduction points to the academic seriousness brought to the task and the variety of explanations available to us. The decline of the movement has not, however, received the required attention for its explanation. Little change was noticed in the objective conditions, and none of the adduced reasons or causes of the rise appeared to have been removed. We may need to relate the reasons of its decline with the explanations of its rise.

Most analysts have traced the genesis of the terrorist violence to the April 1978 armed clash between the followers of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and the sect of Sant

Nirankaris in Amritsar. The prominence of the event lay in the beginning of a demonstrative advocacy of violence as a legitimate course to counter a supposed threat to the Sikh identity, or to deal with the believed "other".¹ The happening had nothing to do with Khalistan as such. The first intimation of the declaration of Khalistan was a paid half-page advertisement in *The New York Times* in the USA in October 1971 by Jagjit Singh Chauhan. That was the time when the guerrilla war of liberation in East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) was turning fierce and tension was mounting between India and Pakistan. The incident passed off as a Pakistan sponsored gimmick. Similarly the hoisting of Khalistan flag atop the Deputy Commissioner's office in Amritsar by a prominent Akali leader, Jiwan Singh Umranangal, was considered an act of vengeance. Perhaps a little more noticeable was the founding in Chandigarh on April 12, 1978 (a day before the clash in Amritsar) of a group called Dal Khalsa. The emergence of the Dal Khalsa was attributed to the Giani Zail Singh-Sanjay Gandhi gameplan to divide the Akali Dal following the Congress party's rout in north India in the 1977 election. The clash with the Nirankaris did not appear at the time to have any direct connection with these events, but their synchronisation was symptomatic.

The mainstream party of the Sikhs, the Akali Dal led by Prakash Singh Badal was, at that time, firmly in command of the government in the state and of the community's religio-cultural domain. It successfully managed to weather minor storms which blew across the state. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution which was adopted in 1973 was hardly talked about until Akali Dal's detractors raised apprehensions regarding its secessionist impulse in 1978, five years after its adoption. A resolution passed at the 18th All India Akali Dal Conference at Ludhiana (October 1978) was meant to allay the existing fears. It tended to clarify that the objective was greater autonomy for the states by making India's constitution more truly federal. Bhindranwale's ego was badly bruised at that conference. Not only was he ignored but also virtually removed from the stage. When he chose to confront the Akalis in the SGPC elections in March 1979, most of his candidates lost the election. His closest protege, Bhai Amrik

Singh, Chief of the All India Sikh Students' Federation, was defeated in the Sant's area of special influence, the Beas constituency. Capturing 95 per cent of elected seats, the Akali Dal claimed its victory to be "a verdict against the extremists who were trying to create communal tension in Punjab".² The bruised ego of a fanatic who debunked power trading could pose a serious threat to the constituted leadership of a community which was given to politics of religion.

The scales were, however, tilted against the Akali Dal after the return of Indira Gandhi's Congress to power at the Centre in 1980. The immediate dismissal of the Badal government in Punjab (by a blatant abuse of Article 356) and the return of the Congress party to power in the state set in motion a very fast slide of the Sikh community into escalating politics of grievance, hatred, ideological militancy, and separatist violence.

The murder of the Chief (Guru) of the Sant Nirankari sect in April 1980 and that of Lala Jagat Narain, the chief editor of Hind Samachar group of newspapers, in August 1981 signalled the launching of terrorist violence. The identifiable fountainhead of that violence and intimidation was Sant Bhindranwale who was cloaked in anonymity before the violent clash in Amritsar. Dalbir Singh, a senior journalist and one of the advisers of Sant Bhindranwale, who met Bhindranwale for several hours soon after the event of 1978, found Bhindranwale to be restless. He was agitated not only over the issue of Sant Nirankaris but also over the believed threat posed to Sikh religion and Sikh interests by the Hindu community and the Indian state. Bhindranwale was convinced that, to use his own words, the Hindu "wants the Sikhs to surrender their identity and dignity to his overlordship. He wants to rule the Sikhs". That would not be allowed. Dalbir Singh predicted that Bhindranwale would lead the Sikhs into serious troubles.³ Media reports and research studies, on the other hand, pointed to Bhindranwale's close interaction with the Congress leaders. It was believed that he was "originally nurtured and marketed by the Centre to cut into the Akali Dal's sphere of influence".⁴ The narrow factional or personal interests of Akali leaders, however, contributed no less to building him up as a macho Sikh hero of the 18th century

vintage, who could not only target the suspected tormentors but also take on the Indian State.

The public democratic protest movement started by the Akali Dal on the issue of river waters and other grievances of Punjab — the *Nahar Roko Morcha* 1981-82—went out of steam within a short time. The Akalis therefore joined Bhindranwale who was now entrenched in the Golden Temple to launch a *Dharam Yudh* (Holy War) in August 1982. It was perhaps a grudging capitulation on their part. However, there may also have been an inclination to utilise his services as a counter in negotiations with the central government. Harchand Singh Longowal described him as "our *lathi* (stick)" to beat the Congress party with. But he knew that it was necessary for the Akali Dal to retrieve the leadership of the Sikh struggle. However, by the middle of 1983, it was evident that the Akali Dal and the SGPC leaders had "practically become hostages of Bhindranwale".⁵ When the latter ridiculed those who opposed violence, reminding them that recourse to arms was part of the Sikh tradition, the Akalis found it difficult to challenge him. Their predicament was rooted in the cultural infrastructure of their politics as well as the decline in their legitimacy. It seemed difficult if not impossible for them to confront Bhindranwale when he eulogised and advocated use of violence for a Sikh cause. More so if he was viewed by the Sikhs as a daring religious leader who was not guided by any lust for power.

Religio-cultural sanction for the use of violence is part as much of the Sikh religious prayer as of the Jat tradition and folklore. Violence has been considered no less central to the Sikh heritage than the glorious legacy of non-violent struggle for the liberation of Gurdwaras during 1920-25, particularly the legendary *Guru Ka Bagh morcha*. Disinclination for violence remained a dominant part of the idiom of mass protest and political practice till the beginning of 1980s.

The partition of Punjab in 1947 was rooted in the logic of religious community as a nation, the principle which became the single most important factor in shaping the perceptions, demands and political goals of the Sikh community. The conceptualisation of religious community as a political community had been promoted during the pre-independence

period. It was legitimised for making deals and allocating power and patronage in the secular domain. Therefore the post-partition predicament of the ruling Akali leadership echoed a cry of anguish: "The Hindus got Hindustan and Muslims got Pakistan. What did the Sikhs get"? The leadership came to believe that it might be very difficult to preserve distinct identity and religion without political power. *Raj bina nahin dharam chale hai* (religion does not survive without state power) came to be articulated as a sacred maxim. Master Tara Singh, the most prominent leader of the Sikhs at the time, professed a deep sense of impending threat: "The Panth is in danger . . . we cannot survive under Hindu domination".⁶ This sense of insecurity — "a retreat into a ghetto" — seemed peculiar to the urbanite non-Jat refugee Sikhs, because of their socio-political milieu in East Punjab. Adherence to religion was for them "a political act".⁷

Tara Singh's Akali Dal resolved in October 1949 that its political objective was the formation of a Sikh majority state within India.⁸ However, the ruling ideological imperative of nation-building on secular democratic principles in post independence India, tended to ridicule and disallow the consideration of a religious community as a political entity. As "communalism" came to be regarded subversive and anti-national, the Sikh leadership felt "betrayed". Communalism of the majority community, as was the case with a dominant section of Hindus in Punjab, could be sustained under the veneer of nationalism. The Akali leadership lacked the idiom of secular politics. Their ideological power base lay in the control of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) which had since 1925 "provided to the Dal an institutional structure for Sikh communal separatism".⁹ But as Paul Wallace correctly underlined, it never extended to imply "political separatism" from India.¹⁰ Master Tara Singh explained that the urge "to maintain the independent status of Sikhs" meant provision for political domination of the Sikhs at the provincial level.

However, the new compulsions of politics demanded alternative and overlapping idioms for operation in the "two mutually antagonistic political systems" — one the secular domain of the State political system and the other of the SGPC

centered religious political system. The Akali Dal's struggle for Punjabi Suba veered round to the subterfuge of a demand for a linguistic state. The potential power of the ideology of "Sikh Homeland" and the mythology and symbolism that surrounded it, was not lost on the ruling leadership. So long as the going was good in the secular domain that ideology could be in the background; crisis situations would see it recalled as a flagship.

Meanwhile, a great significance was attached to a particular construction of the past tradition, and a selective self - image was given shape and form by opposing it to the "other" i.e., the Hindu. Robin Jeffrey referred to his continual astonishment at the way versions of the Sikh past or a rhetorical history was constructed. That included the "fanciful" and the "undocumentable" to suit specific political purposes. At the popular level a particular aspect of the Sikh past, the Khalsa tradition, tended to overshadow the other revered traditions.¹¹ The *Khalsa* was destined to be a sovereign ruler, it was emphasised, and that called for a violent struggle. A couplet, *koi kisi ko raj na day hai, jo lay hai nij bal say lay hai* (nobody gifts power to another, whoever acquires it, snatches it by one's power) appealed as a sort of divine injunction.

In sermons, lectures, heroic versifications, attire and even in worship, a leading stratum of Sikh males began to "reemphasise the violent aspect of their past". It involved "forgetting the peaceful history". The "sword" as the image of masculinity; and the British designation of Sikhs as a "martial race", came to be highlighted to distinguish from and counterpose the Sikhs against the "effeminate other".¹²

The platform of the religio-cultural domain allowed and encouraged a version of the heritage with its special emphasis on "sacred" violence in defence of the "cause". Akali Dal's political stage, on the other hand, would be generally used to articulate grievances of discrimination against Punjab state and the Sikhs and the demands relating to secular, material and political interests. The dissident leaders, in search of competitive advantage or radical posturing found it more suitable to accuse the ruling leadership of ignoring the priorities of cultural nationalism and self determination for petty materialist gains. Which of the two idioms gained ascendance

in the public space depended as much on features of the objective conditions and the nature of intervention made by the state as on the space available for symbolic representation, factional interests and idiosyncracies of the leaders.

The Akali Dal's election manifestoes since 1962 chose to project it as a "political party" devoted to regional interests of Punjab. Issues of Sikh identity and "Sikh interests" were kept out of the text. Rallying behind Jaya Prakash Narayan in the fight against the Emergency regime of Indira Gandhi (1975-77) made the Akali Dal a part of the national democratic mainstream that was dedicated to dismantling the centralised authoritarian power structure in the country. The unprecedented victory in 1977 elections provided to the party an opportunity of exercising political power in the State and also in the Central government in collaboration with other parties. As its adversary, the Congress party did not pose a challenge any more a secular democratic regional framework of politics appeared to offer to the Akali Dal greater dividend. The dissidents in the party who tended to exploit the alternative idiom of cultural separateness and self determination could be somewhat comfortably tackled.¹³ It was considered to be an appropriate tactic to bring the authority of the *Jathedar* of Akal Takht in the service of the party's ruling interests in order to rein in the dissidents when necessary. Even during the elections to the SGPC, a patently religious domain, the issue of state autonomy could be successfully counterposed to defeat all the others who were now described as "sectarian and extremist forces".

The periods 1967 to 1980 and 1994 to the present were broadly those of dominance of the regional democratic idiom over the other one. A reversal of the process marked the period 1980-94. The political scenario changed when the Congress reemerged on the national scene with a bang in 1980, dismissed the Akali government in Punjab and threatened to marginalise the Akalis politically and the Sikh community, in general, culturally. A deeper threat lay in the Congress design to favour the militant and Khalistani elements, both by subtle manipulation and provocation. Bhindranwale was helped to appear larger-than-life. India's Home Minister was perceived to have rescued Bhindranwale from the charge of

complicity in the assassination of the Nirankari Chief and Lala Jagat Narain. On the other hand, the indiscriminate harassment and insult of Sikhs on way to Delhi through Haryana during the 1982 Asian games, made the Sikhs feel, perhaps for the first time, that they were a threatened minority in the country. Among these Sikhs were a number of serving and retired Army officers who felt humiliated by the highhanded and foul-mouthed policemen in Haryana. That provided fuel to Bhindranwale's fire. Avenging insult to the Sikhs became his emotive appeal and some of the ex-Army officers such as (General) Shahbeg Singh and Major General (Retired) Narinder Singh became his followers. The Akali Dal now chose to align with Bhindranwale in a joint struggle though formally under the command of Harchand Singh Longowal as the "dictator" of the *Dharamyudh morcha*.

From then on it was Bhindranwale who called the shots. Despite their evident discomfiture the Akali leaders were compelled to lead a militant struggle for "the final and total achievement of the political goal of Anandpur Sahib Resolution". The Sikh Intellectuals Conference on January 9, 1983 indicated the growing swing in favour of Bhindranwale's line of thought. On April 13, Harchand Singh Longowal administered an oath of allegiance to a hundred thousand people - described as *marjeewade* (oath bound to live and die) - for the cause. Yet it did not imply a recourse to violent struggle. Nor did it seem to rule out negotiations with the government.

To Bhindranwale, however, any negotiations with the central government was akin to begging for concessions; something patently dishonourable to the 'Khalsa' of Guru Gobind Singh. "*Shastradhari bano*" (take up the arms) was his call. He asked the Sikh youths to acquire "a motorbike and fire arms". Because as he put it, *Ohnan di nazar tuhadi talwar te hai, uhnan di nazar tuhadi darhi te hai* (their [i.e. the 'Hindus'] eyes target your sword and your beard i.e. for robbing the Sikhs of their Khalsa character and masculinity).¹⁴ Bhindranwale appeared to understand that hate was a stronger passion than love. So, he emphasised on the objects of hate and directed the "Khalsa" to slaughter the "enemy" or die as a martyr. There was no middle path for ending what

was described as "the slavery of the Sikhs". A typical exhortation ran as follows:

I cannot really understand how it is that, in the presence of the Sikhs, Hindus are able to insult (the scriptures). I don't know how these Sikhs were born to mothers and why they were not born to animals, to cats and bitches . . . Whosoever insults the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book), should be killed there and then.¹⁵

The youths who responded to Bhindranwale's call saw him in the mould of Guru Gobind Singh and felt that he had arrived as a savior to rescue the besieged Sikhs.¹⁶

The Golden Temple over a period of time turned into a sanctuary for the killers. Sophisticated weapons were brought and sold inside the temple which was allowed to become a centre for training in the use of modern fire arms. Armed men were frequently seen moving about in the *parikarma* of the temple. It was anathema to many Sikhs that the abode of the Guru, known for its blissful serenity, should evoke horror in the devotees. Tavleen Singh, a well known journalist, went on record to confess that as a Sikh she felt ashamed of the sacrilege to the spirit of piety. Bhindranwale was furious and insulted her when she subsequently went to interview him. His remarks at the daily congregation were typical:

We are the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh. To wear arms is not only our right, it is our fundamental duty. This Bibi (lady) calls herself a Sikh, and says she feels ashamed to see weapons inside the Golden Temple. One who is ashamed of weapons is not a Sikh.¹⁷

While the violence spread, the police force seemed to be in retreat. It had become, over a long period, an instrument for partisan ends. Indecision at the political level and confused signals from different functionaries paralysed its command structure. Bhindranwale's gunmen were better equipped with weapons than the policemen who chose to run for personal safety when retaliatory action was required. This was most evident when A.S. Atwal, D.I.G. of Police, was killed at the entrance of the Golden Temple. The incident, as Robin Jeffrey observed, "emphasised the disintegration of

Punjab police as a reliable institution".¹⁸ Apprehensions of infiltration of militants into the ranks or a direct complicity of the policemen became pervasive and contributed to the myth of Bhindranwale's supremacy around the time the Darbara Singh government was dismissed in October 1983.

The Akali leaders became increasingly uncomfortable with the rise in violence and the emotive appeal of Bhindranwale. When the dead bodies stuffed in gunny bags started appearing in the gutters outside the temple with sickening regularity, the threat to their own lives inside the temple was palpable. A journal of Sikh militancy *Sant Sipahi* reported that 17 people were killed on the temple premises before "Operation Blue Star".¹⁹ Political compulsions or plain cowardice prompted the Akalis to warn the government against the entry of the police into the temple. Instead, support of an outfit called Babbar Khalsa was taken to provide security to Sant Longowal and others inside the Golden Temple. The Babbar Khalsa was composed of the members of Sant Randhir Singh's *Kirtani Jatha* which was opposed to Bhindranwale. A two pronged strategy was at work: i) to negotiate a settlement of the Punjab problem with the Centre and ii) to capture the command of the militant movement by removing Bhindranwale from his sanctuary in the temple. One - upmanship, seemed a part of the tactics in the tug of war for supremacy. Therefore the Akali leaders tended to provide justification for violence. They also hurried to offer strong denials of the presence of arms and killers inside the temple and of their differences with Sant Bhindranwale. The government was blamed for the terrorist violence and for maligning the Sikhs. However, all the tactics of the Akali leaders to outmanoeuvre Bhindranwale failed.

In December 1983 a clash between the two armed groups inside the Golden Temple was, for example, stage managed with a view to remove Bhindranwale's men from Guru Nanak Niwas. It boomeranged. Bhindranwale shifted to the building of the Akal Takht alongwith his followers. The SGPC Chief's appeal to him to return to Guru Nanak Niwas was turned down.²⁰ Violence escalated further in the early part of 1984. Thanks to a steady influx of sophisticated weapons (General) Shahbeg Singh was able to carry on the fortification of the

temple. The writing on the wall was now bold enough. The media and the public cried for action by the government. "The people of Punjab are not concerned anymore with means and methods. They want to be allowed to live in peace", wrote the *Tribune* editorially.²¹ Yet while the Akalis looked frantically for some negotiated agreement to avoid an inevitable intervention by the security forces, the leaders of the ruling Congress party did not seem to be willing to oblige them. Many suspect that the Central government had already worked out a different agenda.

By April 1984 Bhindranwale knew that the entry of armed forces into the temple was a certainty. He is reported to have told one of his close advisers as under:

Listen to me carefully. Today is April 14. In the first week of June, the Indian Army will come and invade the Harimandar Sahib. I am the *darban* [porter, caretaker] of the Darbar Sahib and I will keep my post. I cannot say what the other Sant will do.²²

The suggestion of another Major General (Retd.) reportedly close to Bhindranwale to avoid bloodshed inside the temple met with ridicule.²³ Dalbir Singh recalled Bhindranwale consulting him on the receipt of a letter from the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. It was a personal handwritten (two paragraphs) invitation to the Sant for talks without any preconditions. When the Sant pressed him for a clear opinion, Dalbir Singh said: "If you do not negotiate, you will die. If you do, the Sikhs will take you for yet another opportunist." The die was cast: no negotiations.²⁴ Bhindranwale was going to be a martyr to the cause.

"*Singho ! oh din nazdik aagaya hai jis di asanoon partikhia si* (O' Singhs! the day we have been waiting for has come closer)", the Sant called out while addressing his close followers in a room in the Akal Takht building during late May 1984. Bhindranwale warned them: "The enemy will come with heavy weapons". Dalbir Singh, who was specially summoned to the meeting was struck by the recitation of a melancholic shabad: "*Yeh panchhi akela hai, ehde magar shikari kaun* (Here's a lonely bird, it knows not where the hunter lurks). Dalbir Singh recalled that the Sant gave detailed instructions about steps and tactics to be followed in the

eventuality of a military operation.²⁵ Clearly, his chosen field of battle and bloodshed was inside the Golden Temple, within and in front of the Akal Takht building. Ironically, the "*darban*" had no notion of a fight outside the Golden Temple which would safeguard the holy temple from desecration. Then he turned to Dalbir Singh to instruct him that in the event of his 'martyrdom' his dead body should be cremated on the road just outside the entrance to Chowk Mehta, the headquarters of Damdami Taksal.²⁶ Ironically, his closest followers of the Taksal denied him the glory of a 'martyr' that was so dear to his heart.

The last minute conclave between the Central leaders and the Akali Dal was held on May 26. Did they discuss the impending operation? Perhaps yes. Nobody suspected at the time that "Operation Blue Star" would turn out to be such a "fatal miscalculation". Those in charge of the operation had worked on the premise that Bhindranwale's militants would soon capitulate.²⁷ The operation and its aftermath has been written about extensively. There has been widespread questioning of the wisdom of military action in the temple. It created a deep sense of humiliation and grievous hurt among the Sikhs all over the world. No wonder, violence was never considered as legitimate a weapon earlier as it was following the operation. The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the massacre of the Sikhs in Delhi and several other places pointed to a most threatening aspect of communal hatred and social disorganisation. The country was "swarming with otherness". Rajiv Gandhi's Congress party was able to win a massive mandate in the Lok Sabha election in December 1984 on the plank of an alleged secessionist threat to the country's integrity. On the other hand, the people in Punjab's countryside went through the searing experience of combing operations called "Operation Woodrose".

When the Punjab Accord was signed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Harchand Singh Longowal in June 1985 it was like a sudden burst of light at the end of a dark tunnel. It was viewed as the return of sanity; "an end to the era of confrontation". The Anandpur Sahib Resolution was no more regarded as secessionist. The focus was on the negotiable demands not on its emotive symbolism. The

massive voter turn-out in the Assembly elections soon after and the unprecedented popular support for the Akali Dal symbolised the public choice to punish the wily Congress through the ballot. "The Congress had lost the election," said Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, "but the country had won a battle for unity". In retrospect, however, it was no more than petty political posturing for managing a serious conflict. Petty political calculations prevailed again as the government backed down on the implementation of the terms of the Accord.

The Barnala government was as much threatened by sabotage from within his party as by the Central government. More serious, however, was the challenge from the scattered militants — the bitter harvest of "Operation Woodrose" — now in hiding, either in Pakistan or in remote areas within India. The message given by the assassination of Sant Longowal in a public religious gathering within a month of the signing of the Accord pointed to the challenge. The opponents viewed the Accord as a measure for "fragmenting the unity of political purpose among the Sikhs", resulting from the efforts of those ruling interests among the Sikhs whose "power base was grounded on collaboration".²⁸ Healing the wounds and winning the hearts and minds was not the task to be left to the machinations of politicians and the "law and order mindset". By January 1986, armed militants had once again regrouped to make the Golden Temple their centre. The immediate pretext was the demolition of the government built Akal Takht.

The *Sarbat Khalsa* congregation called by the Damdami Taksal on January 26 attracted thousands of saffron turbaned angry men shouting for revenge and "Khalistan". Two recent studies by Joyce Pettigrew and Ram Narayan Kumar based on interviews with the policy makers, organisers, and activists of Khalistan movement provide fairly authentic view of the process of thinking, linkages and working during the period of the struggle.²⁹

Both Pettigrew and Kumar refer to "conflicting enthusiasms" among the leaders of the AISSF, Damdami Taksal and the United Akali Dal of Sant Bhindranwale's father, Baba Joginder Singh. Differences over policy and tactics were marked by the competition for capturing the

leadership of the militant struggle. The announcement made by Mohkam Singh of Damdami Taksal regarding the appointment of the Panthic Committee and the replacement of the SGPC appointed Jathedars by the new appointees came as a surprise to some of the prominent militant leaders. The members of the Apex Committee—Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, Aroor Singh, Dhanna Singh and Gurdev Singh—were a bunch of little known people, singularly lacking in political sense or religious convictions, and they had been chosen to serve as "pawns" of one group. Their daring vengefulness and predilection for violence were perhaps the only qualifications. Jasbir Singh Rode was nominated the Head Priest of the Akali Takht and his brother-in-law Gurjit Singh replaced the earlier chief of AISSF. A brash manipulation by the kins of Bhindranwale to appropriate dominant positions was resented by many. Wassan Singh Zaffarwal objected to interference by Baba Joginder Singh. Zaffarwal describes his encounter with Baba's group on the issue of leadership positions. But "when he saw our weapons", asserted Zaffarwal, the Baba and his men beat a hasty retreat and "he left Darbar Sahib".³⁰

On April 29, 1986, the Panthic Committee announced the formation of Khalistan. Those opposed to this ill-conceived move were sidelined. The declaration claimed that the call for the foundation of Khalistan was given by Sant Bhindranwale on June 3, 1984. Sikh religion was to be regarded as the official religion of the 'State'. Sikhs living outside Punjab were called upon to migrate and settle in the province. Those who did not agree with the programme — the so-called "mercenaries and sold out Kesadhari Hindus" — were warned against causing obstructions.³¹ Manbir Singh Chaheru, a former Nihang Singh, later a follower of Sant Bhindranwale, was appointed commander-in-chief of Khalistan Commando Force (KCF).

Reproducing the text of the declaration, the Sant Sipahi reported the violent incidents and commands issued to Hindus to leave Punjab. "If they started leaving, there would follow riots against Sikhs outside Punjab, making it difficult for them to live there. Perhaps, this is precisely what the supporters of Khalistan wanted".³²

The SGPC leadership had capitulated once again as the armed bands of warriors of Khalistan came to exercise full control over the Golden Temple after replacing the SGPC appointed Jathedar of Akal Takht and other major functionaries by their own militants. On April 30, when the Barnala government sent the police force into the temple to expel the militants, it was discovered that all those who had operated from within the Temple for about four months had left soon after making the declaration of Khalistan. Some of them such as Wassan Singh and Gurjit Singh crossed over to Pakistan. However, sending policemen into the temple was regarded by the SGPC Chief and other detractors of Chief Minister Barnala as a sacrilege. The opportunity for settling factional scores could not be allowed to pass. Important Akali leaders such as Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Parkash Singh Badal, Amarinder Singh, Sukhjinder Singh and their followers, a total of 27 MLAs broke away from the ruling Akali Dal reducing it to a minority in the legislative assembly. The government was forced to depend on the Congress party support for its survival. The failure to implement the Punjab Accord, which was indicative of bad faith on the part of the Indian government, had already reduced Barnala's legitimacy. Now he was forced to undertake punishment by the SGPC appointed Jathedar of the Akali Takht to atone for the sin of sending the police into the temple. The spectacle of the Chief Minister's humiliation and helplessness triggered further demoralisation of the police at a time when many of the 700 detainees released by his government earlier had reportedly joined the militants.

In March 1986, J.F. Ribeiro had taken over as Director General of Punjab Police. He soon discovered the near impossibility of his task. Beside their fire power and high motivation the well armed terrorist groups appeared to enjoy significant support in the community. On the day he assumed office, one shoot-out in Ludhiana had left 13 civilians killed and 17 injured. Soon after Manbir Singh's group, in a daring operation, killed six escorting police constables in the civil court at Jalandhar and secured the release of 4 dreaded terrorists from police custody. In July another group killed at Khudda 22 Hindu passengers travelling in a bus. In November, 24 bus passengers were killed near Hoshiarpur. The killing of

the former Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. A.S. Vaidya in Pune, an aborted attempt on the life of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at Raj Ghat, Delhi, on 2nd October and the escape of DGP Ribeiro and his wife from a well-planned attack inside the Punjab Armed Police Complex the next day were some of the other prominent and disturbing actions. By the end of 1986, the number of people killed during the year rose to 520. Most of those killed were Hindus. Nearly double the number were killed the following year. The then Governor Siddharth Shankar Ray conceded in a talk with V.N. Narayanan that the government was paralysed. It were the terrorists who ruled by fiat and killings.³³ "Bullet for Bullet", Ribeiro's controversial remark, symbolised the desperation of the police force. The policemen resorted to hiding during the night, and raiding the villages in the morning. Plain liquidation of a suspect was described as an escape or an "encounter". The escalation of terrorist violence continued until the middle of 1992 after which it started declining. According to a retired Director General of Police, "The violence and terrorism which accompanied militant politics were unparalleled in the world in their sweep and lethal effects".³⁴ However, once the movement collapsed, one was left wondering how could it disappear so suddenly and without leaving any trace of cultural sympathy for the "fighters".

Notes

¹According to Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, Bhindranwale shouted: "We will not allow this Nirankari convention to take place. We are going to march there and cut them to pieces". *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle*, Rupa & Co., London, 1985, p. 59.

²S.S. Suri and R.N. Dogra, "A Study of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Elections, 31 March 1979", Mimeo. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1979, pp. 82-83.

³Gist of the interview in Ram Narayan Kumar, *The Sikh Unrest and the Indian State: Politics, Personalities and Historical Perspective*, Ajanta, 1997, Delhi, pp. 37, 40.

⁴Ayesha Kagal, "Armed Coup in Golden Temple", *Times of India, Sunday Review*, 19 December 1982; Harish K. Puri, "Religion and Politics in Punjab", in Moin Shakir (ed.), *Religion, State and Politics in India*, Ajanta, Delhi, 1989, p. 338.

⁵Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 160.

⁸Jaswant Singh (ed.), *Master Tara Singh: Jiwan Sangharsh Te Udesh* (Punjabi), Amritsar, 1972, p. 198.

⁹Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, "The Influence of Urban Sikhs on the Development of the Movement for a Punjabi Speaking State", *Journal of Sikh Studies*, V: 1 (February 1978), pp. 156-57 and 166.

¹⁰*The Tribune*, October 24, 1949, cited from Paul Wallace, "Political Violence and Terrorism in India", in Martha Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 1995, p. 374.

¹¹Rajiv Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, p. xvi.

¹²Paul Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

¹³Robin Jeffrey, "Grappling with Sikh History: Sikh Politicians and the Past", *Pacific Affairs*, LX: 1 (Spring 1987), pp. 59-63.

¹⁴Veena Das, "Time, Self and Community: Features of the Sikh Militant Discourse", in *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*, OUP, 1998, pp. 122-123.

¹⁵Harish K. Puri, "Compulsions of Akali Politics", in Paul Wallace and Surendra Chopra (eds.), *Political Dynamics and the Crisis in Punjab*, GND University, Amritsar, 1988, p. 311.

¹⁶Veena Das, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

¹⁷Cited in Joyce Pettigrew, "In Search of a New Kingdom of Lahore", *Pacific Affairs*, LX: 1 (1987), p. 16.

¹⁸Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence*, Zed Books, London, 1995, p. 32.

¹⁹Cited from Ram Narayan Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

²⁰Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India*, p. 170.

²¹*Sant Sipahi*, July 1988.

²²Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

²³Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 171.

²⁴Cited by Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

²⁵Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 186.

²⁶Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 196.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁰Pettigrew, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³¹See notes 3 and 16.

³²Text of the interview of Zaffarwal in Pettigrew, *op. cit.* pp. 151-52.

³³See The Text of "Declaratin of Khalistan" in *Sant Sipahi*, June 1986, pp. 25-27.

³⁴*Sant Sipahi*, June 1986, p. 28.

³⁵Narayanan, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁶K.S. Dhillon, "A Decade of Violence, 1983-1992" in J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga (eds.) *Punjab in Prosperity and Violence*, Institute of Punjab Studies, Chandigarh, 1998, p. 105.

The Fighters : A Profile

Terrorist violence may be taken as a purposive social act. It is generally resorted to consciously in opposition to the state and its laws. It is meant to realise certain ends. The proclaimed purpose of the specific terrorist movement in Punjab was the achievement of Khalistan. A section of the community including intellectuals and political leaders considered it a desperate but legitimate struggle in defense of their community interests against the "oppressive Indian State" and its institutions and policies. The generally approved term used to describe the phenomenon was 'Sikh militancy' or simply 'militancy'. Those who resorted to such violence were Warriors or freedom fighters to one section of the people. To the others, they were "terrorists". Terrorism is both a descriptive term and a political label. Its use involves a moral judgement. However, many of our respondents used two expressions interchangeably 'extremists' (*atwadi*) and terrorists (*atankwadi*). Most of the common people who did not want to use either of the two expressions, chose to call them *Kharku* (combatants, militants), *Kharku Singhs* (militant Sikhs) or just "mundey" (literally, boys). The term "mundey" acquired a specific meaning in the given socio-historical context. We debated which would be the appropriate term to describe them; initially deciding to retain the term "militant". Our field experience persuaded us that the particular kind of violence may be termed as terrorism and that the "boys", we came to know about, may be appropriately termed "terrorists" because of their manifest intent, traits and activities.

The field study was focussed on their composition, their impulses or reasons for the course they chose, their

behaviour traits and preferences during the period of their operations.

1. Period of Recruitment

A total of 323 participants in terrorist violence were identified by our respondents spread over 28 villages in the four police districts as belonging to their villages. The largest 112 were listed from the 7 villages of Tarn Taran police district. The largest number from any one village was 41 (Sur Singh in the same police district). The number of the participants from the 7 selected villages each from the other police districts were: Amritsar 70, Majitha 77 and Batala 64. Among these 3 were women, all in Majitha police district.

Table II: Recruitment of Militants

Year of Recruitment	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1979	-	-	-	1	1
1980	-	3	-	2	5
1981	1	-	1	1	3
1982	-	-	-	-	-
1983	-	-	1	2	3
1984	4	-	7	4	15
1985	2	1	5	2	10
1986	7	8	15	8	38
1987	11	8	14	4	37
1988	14	15	22	17	68
1989	7	12	30	13	62
1990	12	19	12	6	49
1991	7	8	5	4	24
1992	3	2	-	-	5
Year Not Known	2	1	-	-	3
Total	70	77	112	64	323

The first one identified as having taken to terrorism in the area of our study was in 1979 from village Khojala in Batala

Almost as many as those who joined terrorism during the peak period of 1988-89 were killed during 1989-1990. About 30 per cent of the total were killed within one year of their joining and another 24 per cent within 2 years. (Table III). 50 per cent of those recruited from one village (Sur Singh) in Tarn Taran police district were killed within one year of their joining the operations.

Of the 12 among them who lived longest in the terrorist struggle, i.e. 8 years or more, all had joined before 1984, half of them being originally influenced by Bhindranwale's preaching or as a reaction to "Operation Blue Star". One with the longest innings of 12 years in our selected villages was "Charhat Singh" who had taken to it in 1983 and was killed in 1995.

Two kinds of implications may be drawn from this short span of active life of the terrorists. One, that the police and other para-military forces chased them effectively killing them in encounters or after arrest. Secondly, that relatively young boys who joined were inexperienced in terrorist activities and were trapped because of lack of maturity. As a corollary to these one may talk about intergang rivalries resulting in

Table IV: Present situation of those who joined Terrorism (according to Police District)

Sr. No.	Present Situation	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1	Arrested	13	6	14	1	34 (10.53)
2	Surrendered	3	7	2	12	24 (7.43)
3	Still at large/ No whereabouts	2	4	1	-	7 (2.170)
4	Killed	51	59	95	51	256 (79.25)
5	No information	1	1	-	-	2 (0.62)
Total		70	77	112	64	323 (100)

mutual killings or in giving an advantage to the police to liquidate rivals. It however seemed that both the factors contributed to that phenomenon. Our field view indicated plausibility of a particular killing by rival groups being claimed as achievement of the police and a killing of a suspect by the police attributed to or claimed by a militant outfit. This would become clearer after the discussion of other related dimensions. The small number of those who joined before 1984 evidently planned their movements carefully staying beyond the reach of the police for long; some of them having escaped from the Golden Temple at the time of "Operation Blue Star" and following declaration of Khalistan in April 1986.

3. Caste

A predominant majority of the participants, 264 out of 323, i.e. 81.73 per cent were Jat Sikhs by caste. (Table V) The closest other caste to which 7.42 per cent of them belonged was that of *Mazhbi* (scheduled caste) Sikhs. Two per cent were from Ramgarhia (carpenter) caste, and a smaller number from Kumhar, Nai, Jheer and Chhimba castes, and, Christian dalits; all those belonging to the backward castes constituted 7 per cent of the total. Interestingly, two of them were Hindus too. As for the leaders of the militant organisations or their cells, barring one, all were Jats.

If we look at the caste composition of the Sikhs, then we find that Jats form an overwhelming majority almost two-thirds of the Sikh population.¹ From this perspective too the Jats among the militants were more than their proportion in the Sikh population. What is noteworthy is the lack of participation of Khatri and Arora Sikhs who are part of the upper castes among the Sikhs. One reason could be that since the Khatri and Arora Sikhs are mostly city dwellers the terrorists from these castes were not expected in a study focussing on the villages. However, villages such as Mattewal had some population of Khatri and Aroras and some of the villages, viz. Bhikhiwind, Guru Ki Waldali and Sultanwind had strong urban basis. It is plausible to argue that the absence of Khatri and Arora Sikhs in our list is not accidental; it represented a pattern.

Table V: Caste Background of Terrorists

Sr. No.	Caste	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Jat	58	64	88	54	264 (81.73)
2.	Arora	-	-	1	-	1 (0.31)
3.	Ramgarhia	3	2	3	-	8 (2.48)
4.	Kumhar	2	1	3	-	6 (1.86)
5.	Jheer	1	-	1	2	4 (1.24)
6.	Chhimba	-	1	-	1	2 (0.62)
7.	Nai	-	-	5	1	6 (1.86)
8.	Mazhbi	6	5	9	4	24 (7.42)
9.	Brahmin Hindu	-	1	-	-	1 (0.31)
10.	Khatri Hindu	-	-	1	-	1 (0.31)
11.	Christian	-	-	1	2	3 (0.93)
12.	Other (Kashmiri Sikh)	-	3	-	-	3 (0.93)
Total		70	77	112	64	323

4. Family Landholding

Though caste wise most of the armed fighters belonged to the dominant agricultural caste group (Jat), the class

configuration showed that only 14 per cent of the total came from families owning land holdings of 10 acres or more. A vast majority, that is 64.41 per cent came, on the other hand, from the poor underprivileged strata of the rural society. About 20 per cent of them being from the families of the landless and over 45 per cent from those owning small and marginal (upto 5 acre) land holdings. About 23 per cent belonged to middle class farming families owning 6-10 acres of land (Table VI). Broadly similar was the economic background of the leaders: 66 per cent of them being from the small, marginal or landless agricultural families. Only 5 of the 21 leaders were from the families owning 10 acres or above; 2 of them being rich, owning between 25-50 acres (Table VII).

Table VII: Size of Land and Caste of the Leaders.

Sr. No.	Caste	No land	Upto 5 Acres	5.1-10	10.1-15	25.1-50	Total
1.	Jat	1	12	2	3	2	20
2.	Chhimba	1	-	-	-	-	1
		2	12	2	3	2	21

It may be noted that the landless terrorists included mainly non-Jats. The size of landholdings provides a clue to the class situation of a person alongside other indicators such as father's education and occupation. From the perspective of these indicators it could be reasonably stated that these "boys" belonged to the lower classes as their families depended largely upon farming. The ownership pattern given here provides data on family landholdings. The proportion of land coming to the share of these boys particularly the unmarried ones would have come down further.

Table VI: Landholdings of the Terrorists (Police Districtwise)

Sr. No.	Size of Land in Acres	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	No Land	14	15	20	13	62 (19.20)
2.	.25-1	6	8	5	4	23 (7.12)
3.	1.1-2	5	10	11	1	27 (8.36)
4.	2.1-3	6	11	14	8	39 (12.08)
5.	3.1-4	9	11	9	4	33 (10.22)
6.	4.1-5	7	6	8	3	24 (7.43)
7.	5.1-6	2	1	6	11	20 (6.19)
8.	6.1-7	-	1	13	3	17 (5.26)
9.	7.1-8	2	4	2	6	14 (4.33)
10.	8.1-9	-	1	6	7	7 (2.17)
11.	9.1-10	4	1	4	4	13 (4.02)
12.	10.1-15	2	5	7	4	18 (5.57)
13.	15.1-25	5	3	6	2	16 (4.95)
14.	25.1-50	8	-	1	1	10 (3.10)
Total		70	77	112	64	323

Average land holding (in acres) = 5.3 out of 261

5. Family Size

The average size of the family they belonged to was 6. Whereas 53 per cent came from families having 6 members or less, 32 per cent had 7 or 8 members and 15 per cent came from very large families of 9 to 16 members (Table VIII). Interestingly, from the police district of Tarn Taran alone which contributed the largest number of terrorists, 75 per cent of the total had a family size of 9-16 members. Keeping in mind the average landholdings, one could estimate the economic conditions of their families.

Table VIII: Size of the Family of the Terrorists (According to Police District)

Sr. No.	Size	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	1-2	3	2	5	3	13 (4.02)
2.	3-4	10	8	15	9	42 (13.00)
3.	5-6	29	34	31	22	116 (35.91)
4.	7-8	24	25	33	21	103 (31.89)
5.	9-10	4	7	19	7	37 (11.46)
6.	11-12	-	-	5	1	6 (1.86)
7.	13-14	-	1	4	-	5 (1.55)
8.	15-16	-	-	-	1	1 (0.31)
Total		70	77	112	64	323

Average size of family = 6

6. Age at the time of Joining

A predominant majority, 80 per cent were young: average age of a "boy" being 22 years at the time of his joining an

armed organisation. There were 2 per cent terrorists who were in the age group of 14-19 years, whereas 52 per cent were between 20 and 25 years. 15 per cent were between 26 and 35 years and less than 5 per cent were above 35 years when they joined. 10 out of 15 "boys" above the age of 35 years came from one police district of Tarn Taran (Table IX).

Table IX: Age of the Terrorists Police District wise

Sr. No. in (Years)	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1. 14-17	5 (15.15)	13 (39.39)	9 (27.27)	6 (18.19)	33 (10.22)
2. 18-19	12 (21.05)	11 (19.30)	22 (38.60)	12 (21.05)	57 (17.65)
3. 20-21	16 (26.67)	12 (20.00)	20 (33.33)	12 (20.00)	60 (18.58)
4. 22-23	14 (22.95)	15 (24.59)	21 (34.43)	11 (18.03)	61 (18.89)
5. 24-25	11 (23.40)	14 (29.80)	11 (23.40)	11 (23.40)	47 (14.55)
6. 26-35	11 (22.00)	10 (20.00)	19 (38.00)	10 (20.00)	50 (15.48)
7. 36-50	1 (9.09)	1 (9.09)	8 (73.73)	1 (9.09)	11 (3.40)
8. 51-63	-	1 (25.00)	2 (50.00)	1 (25.00)	4 (1.23)
Total	70 (21.67)	77 (23.84)	112 (34.68)	64 (19.81)	323 (100)

Average age in years = 22

7. Level of Education

Contrary to the general belief our data pointed out that whereas 24 per cent of those who took to arms were illiterate another 26 per cent had been in school upto middle standard, half of them having dropped out after primary level. Another 41 per cent had gone upto or completed matric level education. Only 2 per cent had graduate level education and just 3 of the

total were reported to have acquired a professional or a post graduate degree: one MA, one LLB, one MBBS (Table X).

Table X: Education of the Terrorists (Police District wise)

Sr. No.	Education	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Illiterate	12 (15.38)	13 (16.67)	43 (55.13)	10 (12.82)	78 (24.15)
2.	Primary	12 (42.86)	6 (21.43)	7 (25.00)	3 (10.71)	28 (8.67)
3.	Middle	14 (25.45)	10 (18.18)	14 (25.45)	17 (30.92)	55 (17.03)
4.	Matric	23 (17.29)	40 (30.08)	40 (30.08)	30 (22.55)	133 (41.18)
5.	+2 Level	4 (21.05)	7 (36.84)	7 (36.84)	1 (5.27)	19 (5.88)
6.	B.A.	5 (71.42)	-	1 (14.29)	1 (14.29)	7 (2.17)
7.	M.A./LLB/ MBBS	-	-1 (33.33)	-	2 (66.67)	3 (0.92)
Total		70	77	112	64	323

Tarn Taran police district which, as we know, contributed the largest number of recruits had the largest, i.e. 55 per cent, of the illiterates among them, only 1 having studied upto B.A. level.

The data on the educational level of the terrorists, do not only defy the general thesis of educated unemployed youth but also present a pattern contrary to the established notions about who become terrorists. Various studies have found that the terrorists are generally middle class university educated youths.² This is not the case here. What it points to is educational failure working as an impulse for taking to something exciting.

8. What were they doing before joining?

What kind of work/job was a particular person doing before taking to the new role? Our findings were that 37 per cent were associated with farming operations. Another 7 per

cent were self employed in family business or trade, as *paathis* (ritual readers of the holy scripture), Registered Medical Practitioners or in other professions. One of them was an MBBS doctor, one lawyer and one photographer. About 8 per cent were in service, employed in police, army, SGPC and Class IV government jobs, and 2 per cent were ex-service men. Another 6 per cent worked as Rickshaw/tonga/mini bus/truck drivers, or as a mason, carpenter, motor mechanic, barber, milk/vegetable vendor etc. and 5 per cent as casual/attached labourers (Table XI).

Among the others, 4 per cent of the total were identified as involved in the business of smuggling, illicit distillation of liquor and thievery and 6 per cent were students studying in schools and colleges. Interestingly, 25 per cent of the total were reported to be "doing nothing"; the common expressions used by the respondents being *Vehlar* (unemployable; doing nothing) or *awaragard* (loafer; vagabond). For such boys who failed both in terms of education and jobs, the new opportunity offered something more gainfully engaging in terms of loot and thrill.

The pattern was similar among the leaders of various organisations in our area of study. Most of them came from the families of poor, small or marginal farmers and engaged in unexciting jobs before the new opportunity was offered. The Babbar Khalsa International (BK1) prominent leader, Dharam Singh Kashtiwali's family, for example, had settled in village Kashtiwali not long ago and was allotted 10 *marlas* (250 sq. yards) of village land under the focal point scheme. Dharam Singh worked as tractor driver for ploughing the fields of other farmers before he took up the new role. Satnam Singh *alias* Satta Chhina of Harsha Chhina who became Lt. General of BTFK (Sangha) worked on the 2 acre family land. He also acted as a tractor driver like Kashtiwali and was also a partner in running the business of illicit distillation of liquor. Balwinder Singh Shahpur who became a leader of Dashmesh Regiment after the death of Sital Singh Mattewal was an apprentice to a tailor in Butala before he was lured into terrorism by a Nihang who used to frequent his shop. Ravinder Singh Bhola, KLF Chief after the death of Gurjant Singh Buddhsinghwal, was a lineman with Punjab State Electricity Board when he deserted to become a terrorist.

Table XI: Occupation Before they became Terrorists

Sr. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1.	Farming	118	36.53
2.	MBBS/Lawyer	2	0.62
3.	Foreign Returned	3	0.93
4.	Flour Mill Owner	1	0.31
5.	Shopkeeper/Small businessmen/Contractor	6	1.86
6.	Workshop Owner	1	0.31
7.	Cattle/Grain Trader	2	0.62
8.	Pathi	6	1.86
9.	Policeman	7	2.17
10.	Soldier	9	2.79
11.	Clerk S.G.P.C.	2	0.62
12.	Govt. Service (Lower)	5	1.55
13.	Photography	1	0.31
14.	R.M.P.	5	1.55
15.	Ex-servicemen I.T.B.P./Army (Retired)	5	1.55
16.	Tailor	1	0.31
17.	Mason/Carpenter/Blacksmith	5	1.55
18.	Motor Mechanic	4	1.23
19.	Weaver	1	0.31
20.	Barber	1	0.31
21.	Auto-Rickshaw Driver	2	0.62
22.	Mini Bus/Truck Driver	4	1.23
23.	Tonga Driver	1	0.31
24.	Milkman/Vegetable Vendor	3	0.93
25.	Factory Workers	2	0.62
26.	Casual/Attached worker	14	4.33
27.	Smuggling	4	1.23
28.	Illicit liquor distillers	7	2.17
29.	Thief/Looter	1	0.31
30.	Doing Nothing	80	24.77
31.	Not Applicable/Students	20	6.19
Total		323	100

9. Primary Impulse/Reason for Joining

The identification of the primary impulse or reason for a particular person's joining in the operations, as given by our respondents spread over 28 villages was revealing. Something that draws one's immediate attention is that 38 per cent of the total were reported to have joined for adventure, thrill or the 'fun of it'. "Young boys were fascinated with the modern weapons". *Shastran naal moh ho giya see*. Holding a weapon provided a sense of being someone to reckon with. Whereas some of the respondents referred to an additional second or complementary reason also, important for our purpose was the primary motivating factor. "*Shaukia*" (out of fun) was surprisingly a prominent expression used by our respondents in different villages for identification of the reason or motivation. 74 per cent of those from villages in Tarn Taran police district were listed in that category. The closest other reason identified in the case of 21 per cent related to influence or persuasions of other terrorists. Contact with those who were already involved in operations; relatives including brothers or and a leader from one's village became a major factor. For 12 per cent of them the moving impulse was identified as smuggling or "looting" or making money. Half of those in that category were from the villages of Tarn Taran police district (Table XII).

Table XII: Reasons/Motives of Joining Terrorism

Sr. Causes of No. Joining	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1. Out of Fun	22	31	51	19	123 (38.09)
2. Smuggling/ Looting	9	7	20	4	40 (12.38)
3. Contact with Terrorists	7	8	12	7	34 (10.53)
4. For Khalistan	5	3	5	4	17 (5.26)
5. Inter-family enmity	6	3	1	6	16 (4.95)
6. Relations with Terrorists	6	3	6	-	15 (4.64)

Sr. Causes of No. Joining	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
7. Terrorist leader in the village	2	6	-	4	12 (3.72)
8. Influence of Bhindranwale	1	3	3	4	11 (3.41)
9. Harassment by Terrorists	-	-	2	6	8 (2.48)
10. Harassment by Police	4	1	2	1	8 (2.48)
11. Operation Blue Star	4	1	1	2	8 (2.48)
12. Due to Elder brother	2	-	3	2	7 (2.17)
13. Emotionalism	-	2	-	2	4 (1.24)
14. Failure of financial companies	-	3	-	-	3 (0.93)
15. Unemployment	-	-	1	1	2 (0.62)
16. To seek revenge	-	-	2	-	2 (0.62)
17. Personal or family problem	-	-	2	-	2 (0.62)
18. To get married	-	1	-	1	2 (0.62)
19. Delhi Riots	-	1	-	-	1 (0.31)
20. Fear of Court Martial	-	-	1	-	1 (0.31)
21. To get his land back	-	-1	-	-	1 (0.31)
22. Beaten by upper caste class fellows	-	1	-	-	1 (0.31)
23. Not known	2	2	-	1	5 (1.55)
Total	70	77	112	64	323

The purpose of working for Khalistan was identified as the main reason in the case of 5 per cent, the influence of Sant Bhindranwale in the case of 3 per cent; anger or emotional reaction against "Operation Blue Star," Delhi's anti-Sikh riots and other such reasons in the case of 4 per cent. Reaction to harassment by the police was reported as the reason in the case of 2.5 per cent and to harassment by the "Kharkus" or "terrorists" in the case of another 2.5 per cent of the total recruits.

It was reported that among those 11 per cent of the total who had joined upto the end of 1985 about half consisted of those who had either come under the influence of Sant Bhindranwale and/or who took that course as a reaction against "Operation Blue Star". Of the 89 per cent who joined after 1985, less than 2 per cent were reported to have taken to the gun because of the above reasons. The data defy another prevalent notion that most of those who took to armed struggle joined as a consequence of police atrocities on them or the members of their families.³ Whether or not some individuals were impelled by apprehension of their arrest and torture by the police is difficult to fathom. But if we go by what their fellow villagers thought, the proportion of those who joined as a reaction against police atrocities was marginal.

In fact larger proportion were seen to have been motivated by reasons of inter family enmity, seeking revenge, or getting back one's land. Such were the identified reasons in the case of 6 per cent of the total. Personal or family problems, economic distress and other similar reasons were reported to be the basis in the case of another 5 per cent.

Case histories, as constructed in public gatherings of our respondents, brought forth curious reasons of the boys for joining terrorism. In village Mattewal, for example, Sital Singh, who later founded the Dasmesh Regiment, and his close ally Tarsem Singh were reported to have graduated to the new role from an earlier crime. Both of them were involved in the murder of a criminal, referred to as "history sheeter" of the area and were tried and punished to imprisonment for life. During the period they were lodged in Central Jail Gurdaspur, they reportedly came in contact with

some fellow prisoners who had been activists of AISSF. When the two were released on parole, they took advantage of the opportunity for jumping the parole and joining Gurbachan Singh Manochahal's BTFK. Some of the respondents reported that the two had joined Sukhdev Singh Jhamke's group first and then shifted to BTFK. A sharp conflict with Manochahal led to the founding of a parallel organisation called Dashmesh Regiment. After he was killed in what the respondents described as a "genuine encounter" with the police, a report mentioned that Sital Singh had been trained in Pakistan. The people from his village did not confirm the report.

In one village for example, Hardev Singh, turned to terrorism due to reasons related to his family. It became evident from the fact that after becoming a terrorist one of the first things he did was that he murdered his mother because of his shame over her alleged "loose character". Later he was reported to have pressurised a friend to marry his sister to Hardev's younger brother. The friend refused to give in to the pressure but felt threatened as a consequence and, therefore, joined a rival terrorist organisation KCF (P). Later Hardev's cousin was reportedly raped by another terrorist of the village, namely "Billoo" Balwinder Singh. Billoo's family now faced a threat from Hardev's group. So Billoo's father Harnam Singh sought safety by joining another terrorist group. Hardev was murdered in 1990; Harnam Singh surrendered to the police.⁴

In village Udhoke Kalan, Paramjit Singh became a terrorist in order to save his family from the threat which Sukhdev Singh Jhamke and Chanchal Singh posed.

In another village one person took to terrorism following continued ill treatment from his widowed aunt whom his father had married after the death of his mother. A son of a lower caste *chowkidar* of the same village, known as Kebi, was reported to have joined a terrorist group to avenge his beating and public humiliation by his class fellows in the Government College compound in the presence of girl students.

10. Kinship Relations

It was significant that a total of 66 "terrorists" were close relatives; 45 of them being real brothers; others were cousins, uncle-nephews, brothers-in-law, and in two cases sons and

In one village, Sultanwind, 9 of the 30 fathers. (Table XIII). In one village, Sultanwind, 9 of the 30 terrorists were identified as belonging to two families related by kinship. All the three brothers of Gurbachan Singh Manochahal had joined terrorism. Chanchal Singh Udhoke a leading terrorist and chief of KLA was married to the sister of Surjit Singh Penta, Lt. General of BTFK. Penta was related to Harjinder Singh Jinda — the killer of General Vaidya. Jinda was the son of Penta's maternal uncle. Reliance on bonds of kinship or personal friendships implied alternative to ideological basis of organisation. Our field experience underlined a prominent emphasis on personal power and control of the leader in each group. The preference for allocating other important positions to a brother or relative appeared to ensure loyalty and control. Often it led a disgruntled leading member to form his own group, when his claim was ignored, or to rivalry resulting into the killing of another.

Table XIII: Kinship Relationship among Terrorists (Police District wise)

Sr. No.	Nature of Relationship	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Brothers	11	16	12	6	45 (68.17)
2.	Uncle-Nephews	5	-	-	-	5 (7.58)
3.	Father-son	2	-	2	-	4 (6.06)
4.	Brothers, Uncle and his Sons	-	-	-	4	4 (6.06)
5.	Cousins and Uncle	-	-	3	-	3 (4.55)
6.	Brothers and son of one of them	-	-	3	-	3 (4.55)
7.	Cousins	2	-	-	-	2 (3.03)
Total		20	16	20	10	66

11. Militant Organisations

Whereas 10 different militant organisations operated in our villages, the most prominent in order of strength of their members were KCF (Zaffarwal) - 85; KCF (Panjwar) 73; BTFK (Manochahal) 46; KLF 34, BKI 28, BTFK (Sangha) 21 and Dashmesh Regiment 19. (Table XIV) The dominant pattern showed that each of the organisations had pockets of exclusive control particularly in villages to which the Chief of the organisation or a deputy leader belonged and extended to one or more neighbouring villages. It was found that in 10 villages all the terrorists in each case were members of only one particular organisation, while in another 10 villages 70-90 per cent of the participants in each one belonged to only one of the organisations. For example, in Naushehra Panuan and Rataul in the Tarn Taran Police district, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal's own village and the village of his in-laws, all the participants belonged to his organisation BTFK. In the nearby village of Sur Singh, however, not even one militant was a member of BTFK (M); instead 39 of the 41 were identified as members of KCF (Zaffarwal). All those from Mianwind and Bhikhiwind belonged to KCF (Panjwar). Similarly in the villages of Amritsar police district all of them in Basarke Bhaini belonged to KCF (Z), those of Thande and Guru Ki Wadali to KLF, Harsha Chhina to BTFK (Sangha), Sultanwind mainly KCF (P) and those of Meerankot to BKI. In 8 out of the total 28 villages included in our study the participants were divided between two or more organisations. Batala in Majitha police district, for instance, was a village in which the participants were more or less equally divided into four rival organisations; one of the participants was a member of a fifth organisation. KCF (Zaffarwal) had a dominant strength of members in five villages, KCF (Panjwar) and BTFK(S) in four each; and BTFK (M), KLF and BKI in three each. On the other hand, whereas two-thirds of the participants in another village Cheema Khudi were members of BTFK (M), the small group of one-third members remained dominant because of their leader Jugraj Singh *alias* Toofan Singh Toofan of KLF.

Table XIV: Organisations of the Terrorists (Police Districtwise)

Sr. No.	Name of the Organisation	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	All India Sikh Student Federation	-	2	-	-	2 (0.62)
2.	Akhand Kirtani Jatha	1	-	-	-	1 (0.31)
3.	Babbar Khalsa International	10	2	2	14	28 (8.67)
4.	Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (Manochahal)	3	9	28	6	46 (14.24)
5.	Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (Sangha)	10	4	7	-	21 (6.50)
6.	Dashmesh Regiment	-	13	-	6	19 (5.88)
7.	Khalistan Commando Force (Panjwar)	25	17	20	11	73 (22.60)
8.	Khalistan Commando Force (Zafarwal)	5	17	50	13	85 (26.32)
9.	Khalistan Liberation Army	-	-	-	4	4 (1.24)
10.	Khalistan Liberation Force	15	9	2	8	34 (10.53)
11.	No information	1	4	3	2	10 (3.09)
Total		70	77	112	64	323 (100)

It may be noted that the villages where more than one organisation were working had special features. Butala is one of the unique villages where four organisations had bases and operated simultaneously. This was reportedly due to the location of the village. We have pointed out earlier, that this village forms a hub of five to six villages, this being their main marketing village. Thus the people of the surrounding villages, viz. Khanpur, Jamalpur, Chillari, Yodhe, Ghoge, Serone etc. would come to Butala for various economic reasons. As a result the terrorists belonging to all these villages made Butala their headquarter and in the process inspired some young boys to join them. On the other hand, in Udhoke Kalan and Cheema Khudi the presence of more organisations was due to serious inter-family feuds which were related with land control, not of the kind the anthropologists mention as Jat factionalism. However, in the case of Sultanwind, the other organisations vanished after KCF (P) captured the village.

The young boys appeared to opt for a particular organisation due to personal contact and convenience of working with familiar "boys" who were already active.

12. The Leaders of Militant/Terrorist Organisations

The prominent leaders of these organisations who belonged to or operated in villages of the present study included Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, Chief of BTFK (M), Kanwarjit Singh, the chief of KCF before Paramjit Singh Panjwar became its chief and thus making it KCF (Panjwar). Manochahal was a member of the Panthic Committee, the apex body of militant organisations established in April 1986 which had announced the formation of Khalistan. (See Table XV) He was also appointed the acting Jathedar (Head Priest) of the Akal Takhat. Kanwarjit Singh was later one of the five members of the Panthic Committee. After the split he became a member of the rival Panthic committee led by Dr. Sohan Singh. Following the death of Sukhdev Singh Sukha *alias* "Sukha Sipahi", *alias* General Labh Singh, Kanwarjit Singh took over as Chief of KCF. His relative Harminder Singh of the same village was appointed member of the Panthic Committee in his place. Among other important leaders in our area of study

were: Dharam Singh Kashtiwai, Majha region Jathedar (Chief) of BKJ; Satnam Singh (Satta) Chhina who became Lt. General of BTFK (S) after the death of Sangha; Jugraj Singh, popularly known as Toofan Singh Toofan, Deputy Chief of KLF; Sital Singh Mattewal, founder and Chief of Dasmesh Regiment; Dharamvir Singh, leader of AISSF; Balwinder Singh Shahpur, who became chief of Dasmesh Regiment after the death of Mattewal; Ravinder Pal Singh Bhola who became chief of KLF after the death of Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala; Manjit Singh Lt. Gen. KLF, who was earlier a close ally of Avtar Singh Brahma, and Chanchal Singh Udhoke, Chief of KLA; Rajwinder Singh *alias* Charhat Singh, Jathedar of BKJ; and Surinder Singh (Bhikhiwind) Area Commander of KCF (P). A few of them had shifted from one organisation to another.

Only four of these leaders were known to have had a semblance of an earlier political orientation or party affiliation. Manochahal, a former army jawan who was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for assaulting an officer, became a follower of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and was reportedly a part of the *jatha* which had marched to the Sant Nirankari Samagam in Amritsar on April 13, 1978 and was involved in the violent clash. He had remained a part of Bhindranwale's militant struggle. Dharamvir Singh of Kamoke (Butala) was known to have been an activist of the AISSF, and an effective mobiliser among students. He was a candidate of Akali Dal (Mann) in the aborted Assembly election of June 1991 from Beas Constituency. Kanwarjit Singh of Sultanwind belonged to a family having old Congress party affiliation but had veered round to Bhindranwale's *morcha* during 1981-82. Sital Singh Mattewal had some affiliation with the Congress party before he murdered a person in 1979 and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He had reportedly contested an election to the Board of Directors of the Amritsar Cooperative Bank. All the respondents thought he was not a supporter of Khalistan nor did he project a political cause, though they would not know whether and what he discussed with members of his group. There was no evidence that any of the other leaders had any political leanings or affiliations before taking up the guns. Barring two from one village (Sultanwind) belonging to a family of district Congress leader, none of the 323 came from

Table XV: Profile of Prominent Terrorist Leaders (Police Districtwise)

AMRITSAR												
Sr. No.	Name	Village	Position	Terrorist Organisation	Age at Joining	Marital Status	Duration of Activities	Education	Caste	Land of family (in acres)	Family members	Reason of joining
1.	Resham Singh	Thande	Lt. Gen	KCF(Z)	25	M	1987-92	Primary	JAT	12	7	Looting/to make money
2.	Karaj Singh	Thande	Lt. Gen	BTFK(M)	25	M	1986-88	Primary	JAT	4	10	Inter family dispute
3.	Satnam Singh <i>alias</i> Satta Chinna	Harsha Chhina	Lt. Gen later chief*	BTFK(S)	17	U/M	1984-93	Illiterate	JAT	2	6	Poverty/ Operation Blue Star
4.	Har minder Singh	Sultan- wind	Chief of KCF** and member of Sohan Singh Panthic Committee Founder Member	KCF(P)	24	U/M	1984-90	B.A.	JAT	30	8	Operation Blue Star
5.	Kanwarjit Singh	Sultan- wind		KCF(P)	30	M	1988-91	B.A.	JAT	50	5	Operation Blue Star

Sr. No.	Name	Village	Position	Terrorist Organisation	Age at Joining	Marital Status	Duration of Activities	Education	Caste	Land of family (in acres)	Family members	Reason of joining
			of Sohan Singh Panthic Committee									
MAJITHA												
6.	Bhupinder Singh <i>alias</i> Bhinda	Butala	Lt. Gen.	BTFK(M)	22	U/M	1986-89	+2	JAT	4	7	For Khalistan
7.	Bikramjit Singh	Butala	Lt. Gen.	BTFK(M)	18	U/M	1988-91	Matric	JAT	5	7	Links with Terrorists
8.	Ravinder Singh Bhola	Kaleke	Chief of KLF***	KLF	25	M	1987-91	Matric	JAT	2	4	Links with Terrorists
9.	Surjit Singh	Kaleke	Lt. Gen. (now CAT after surrender)	KLF	20	U/M	1988-92	Matric	JAT	3	5	Out of Fun

Sr. No.	Name	Village	Position	Terrorist Organisation	Age at Joining	Marital Status	Duration of Activities	Education	Caste	Land of family (in acres)	Family members	Reason of joining
10.	Sital Singh	Mattewal	Founder Chief	Dashmesh Regiment	35	M	1986-92	Middle	JAT	5	13	Political Ambitions
11.	Bikramjit Singh	Sehnsra	Founder Member of BTFK	BTFK(M)	25	U/M	1980-86	illiterate	JAT	16	8	For looting
TARN TARAN												
12.	Chanan Singh	Gharyala	Founder Member of BTFK	BTFK(M)	63	M	1983-91	illiterate	JAT	25	10	Influence of Bhindranwale
13.	Nirmal Singh	Mianwind	Lt. Gen.	KCF(P)	25	U/M	1986-91	+2	JAT	12	7	To make money
14.	Gurbachan Singh Manochahal	Naushehra Pannuan	Founder Chief	BTFK	35	M	1984-93	Matric	JAT	1	13	Influence of Bhindranwale
BATALA												
15.	Jugraj Singh <i>alias</i> Toofan Singh Toofan	Cheema Khudi	Deputy Chief	KLF	17	U/M	1984-90	Matric	JAT	12	8	Influence of Bhindranwale

Sr. No.	Name	Village	Position	Terrorist Organisation	Age at Joining	Marital Status	Duration of Activities	Education	Caste	Land of family (in acres)	Family members	Reason of joining
16.	Gurnam Singh	Buttar	Member Panthic Committee (Sohan Singh)	BTFK	25	U/M	1988-91	M.B.B.S.	JAT	3	4	For Khalistan
17.	Rajwinder Singh <i>alias</i> Charat Singh	Ghasitpur	Jathedar****	BKI	33	M	1983-95	Matric	JAT	12	8	Influence of Bhindranwale
18.	Dharam Singh	Kashtiwala	Jathedar****	BKI	20	U/M	1984-92	Middle	JAT	Nil	4	For looting
19.	Manjit Singh	Khojala	Lt. Gen.	KLF	25	U/M	1984-89	Middle	Chhimbha	Nil	4	Operation Blue Star
20.	Chanchal Singh	Udhoke	Founder Chief of KLA	KLA	20	U/M	1988-90	Matric	JAT	5	4	Out of Fun
21.	Ranjit Singh (Baba)	Dayalgarh	Lt. Gen.	BTFK	25	U/M	1985-88	Illiterate	JAT	25	7	Contact with terrorists

* After the death of Sangha

** After the death of Labh Singh

*** Became Chief after the death of Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala

**** The position of Jathedar in BKI hierarchy was equivalent of Lt. General of other terrorist organisations.

the family of or was related to a political leader of any party, any *sarpanch* or a *panchayat* member or a social notable. Three of the 'boys' in Gharyala village were reported to have been associated with Students Federation of India, [the students' wing of CPI(M)] in Government College, Patti. The observation of one of our senior respondents *kisey kharkoo di siyaasi dhaak hone dee gull kite sunai nahin ditti* (It was nowhere heard that any militant carried any impression of political sense or influence) summed up the prevalent opinion.

The terrorists conferred upon themselves the honorifics of 'Baba' (as for Gurbachan Singh Manochahal or Geja in Dyalgarh) or "Bhai" (for most of them) and the media dutifully mentioned them as such. "Baba", the term of deep veneration for a distinguished and protestant person was used for Guru Nanak and his contemporary Baba Buddhaji. "Bhai" was generally used for a priest, signifying respect due to a sober religious person. Our respondents generally mentioned the names of the "boys" alongwith the honorific. "*Babe aiyey ney* (It is *Babas* who have come) was the introduction that they gave while commanding the inmates of a house to open the gate/door during the night. However, in no case was any of the 'boys' known for a semblance of social concern or for any religiosity. As our respondents saw them, 90 per cent of the 'boys' including those who were *amritdharis* (baptised) had little familiarity with Sikh scriptures. Whatever the occasional reference to social codes they could not be regarded as religious fanatics or fundamentalists.

Yet it was possible to make distinctions. Dharamvir Singh of Kamoke was viewed by the respondents as one who, unlike the rest, articulated a political orientation towards a Sikh state and also one who was not directly associated with any killings. Extortion of money from well-to-do traders, described as "protection payment", did not appear repugnant to an ordinary farmer or worker. Jugraj Singh *alias* "Toofan Singh" of Cheema Khudi, who was played up in the press as "popular", carried an image of one who did no harm in his own village and who had successfully persuaded 4 families of Hindu migrants to return to the village giving assurance for their safety. An exceptionally large gathering at the 'Bhog' ceremony after his death was, however, viewed by the

respondents as largely 'coerced' through "calls for attendance" given from the Gurdwaras in surrounding villages. As some of them explained, "No one wanted to be noticed as a non-conformist". Bhupinder Singh 'Bhinda' was considered a sort of a 'role model' during the earlier part of his operations. The villagers pointed to large number of specific cases of kidnappings for extortion by him and regular extortion of money from traders, particularly in nearby Rayya Mandi. But that was taken as part of the business. He was, however, more sharply identified as the first to target and kill a Hindu family in Butala with the clear objective of forcing migration. "*Sabh to pehlan ohde kolon Hindu marwaiye san Butale vich* (first of all Hindus were got killed through him)" was the expression implying his exoneration from direct responsibility. About 40 families of Hindus were reported to have migrated from Butala in panic soon after. Yet it was recognised approvingly that he did not, in normal course, do harm to or threaten an ordinary person: "*Aiwein turey jaande noon tang nahin see karda*". That spoke loudly of the mental make-up or the sense of discrimination of the respondents from the village.

In the case of all the others, the key markers of the images held by the respondents from their villages were that they were wayward adventurers, or were there for thrills, or had criminal instincts, or lust or/and revengefulness.

13. Traits

A description: *Ehnan vichon koi vee khaandey peendey ghar da nahin see*, summed up a general low estimation of the "boys". A penchant for identifying the dominant traits of the leading terrorists was, however, prominent in the descriptions given by the respondents in public gatherings. Rajbinder Singh *alias* Charhat Singh, *Jathedar* of BKL, for example, was considered "the greatest extortionist"; an other with a similar reputation being Gurbachan Singh Manochahal. Billa of Varpal was mentioned as "the most notorious hater and killer of Hindus". This was revealed while discussing Balwinder Shahpur's and Bhinda's killing of the people of that community in Butala and adjoining villages. Satnam Singh Satta of Harsha Chhina was described as the "most lustful" adventurer having two wives and a mistress. He was also a "high stakes mercenary who

operated in the Terai region of U.P." and was reputed as the killer of 10 migrant labourers in a shootout in Gujarpur village near Ajnala. The young girl 'Shammi's' home where she lived with a widowed mother and three young sisters was mentioned as the 'adda' where different gangs halted for rest and sexual exploits.

The description of some terrorists as '*bhangar*' (an addict of hemp) or *amli* (opium eater) revealed the image of recruits as belonging to the lower castes. Debu *chowkidar* (watchman), a *mazhbi* of Sathiala, discovered a new surge of his ego after his son took to terrorism. "He commanded sons of Jats to bring from their fields green fodder, carrying big bushels on their heads and feed the *mazhbi's* cattles". It was a lower caste man's sweet revenge against the traditionally dominant and commanding Jats.

Barring reference to only two of the terrorists, none of the others was known as a consumer of liquor. But opium eating was not uncommon. It was mentioned in a number of cases that consumption of a variety of cough syrups such as Benedril, Glycodeine and Phencadryl, with a high content of codeine, became a 'craze'. The chemists/druggists in Baba Bakala, Butala, Sathiala and Kaleke when consulted in this regard, confirmed that large quantities of the cough syrups (full crates in some cases), were ordered by the 'boys'.

What particular demands did they make apart from food and beds when groups forced themselves on families for spending nights? "Almonds" was one of the items. The vulnerable households were advised to keep a ready stock of the believed aphrodisiac. With an impish smile, one or the other respondent occasionally volunteered an explanation: "for the kind of night life they lived how could they survive without almonds and *desi ghee* mixed milk".

Did the police have information about these hideouts? "Of course they did", believed the respondents in Sathiala. "But the police never dared to enter the village after sunset". After the 1989 Lok Sabha elections in which the terrorist supported candidates captured a majority of seats, many villagers, as we were told, came to believe that the future was with the "boys" and that following a settlement with the

Government of India the militants might well become the rulers in Punjab. So the policemen were believed to have become sceptical about what was appropriate for them when they were dealing with the *Kharkus*. Incidentally a few policemen also found a few such homes to be amenable to their own demands of bribe or lust for sex.

Whereas some terrorists like "Satta" Chhina and Bhola later extended their activities to the Terai region of UP and acquired land there, over 90 per cent of the total "boys" were not known to have travelled beyond their district boundaries before they chose the path of adventure.

Another significant trait came to be identified with reference to the cases where the victims decided to confront them with their own weapons. A prominent case related to the armed confrontation and resistance by the family of Mangta Singh of Wadala Kalan in Majitha Police district. (See Chapter VI for details). After the terrorists killed Mangta Singh and injured one of his sons, another of his sons killed the father of one of the terrorists and owned the responsibility and "credit" publicly. The other sons armed themselves and let it be known that they would not permit any terrorists in their village. They got a silent but firm support from the villagers in their resistance against the terrorists. In village Bhukhiwind of Tarn Taran Police district two Sandhu brothers, with the support of their family members, repulsed 18 major attempts (besides about 30 minor attacks) from various groups of terrorists. On the other hand, our respondents believed that a large number of such individuals or families who compromised with the terrorists for safety became the sure victims of continuing blackmail and were often killed. The terrorists were basically "cowards", our respondents observed in two of our village gatherings. On the other hand, one case of killing of a school teacher in Rayya Mandi points to another trait of the "boys". Why was the teacher on a bicycle made the target? Did the killers know him? Was he an informer? No. "The press reports gave the impression that the terrorists were on the run and that the police had an upper hand. We wanted to make a point that we are alive and kicking", one of the terrorists was reported to have remarked. Untargetted murder

served as propaganda as well as intimidation tactics for easy extortion of money.

14. Role of Women

Three women, as mentioned above, were identified as part of the terrorist groups in two villages of Majitha police district. Their role related to carrying messages and arms but more importantly as a cover for safe commuting by closely related terrorists. With a woman on the pillion of a motorbike or one walking beside him, a terrorist could often safely drive or walk through a police check-post set up for routine interrogation, passing for a harmless couple. The respondents identified them as either virtually married or tied by emotional/sexual relations with particular leaders. Kulbir Kaur, popularly known as *Malka* (Empress) was, for example, considered to have been married to Joga Singh, Lt. General of KCF (Z) who belonged to the nearby village of Khanpur. According to our respondents, she reportedly insisted on being killed with him when he was targetted by the police. Similarly Harpal Kaur died in 1993 in a "real encounter" alongside the one she had "an affair" with.

A total of 18 cases of marriages by terrorists were reported by the respondents — making a distinction between 7 cases of marriage by consent and 11 forced ones. Dharam Singh Kashtiwai, Majitha region Chief of BKI, for instance, was reported to have coerced a Jat Sikh family of a nearby village. As described earlier, Satnam Singh alias Satta Chhina married twice and was believed to have another mistress. Toofan Singh of Cheema Khudi, on the other hand, married by mutual consent one Sangeeta Sandu⁵, reportedly a "beautiful 5'x 7" girl who had participated in the national basket ball school competition. After his death in a "real encounter", Sangeeta started living with Balwinder Singh Shahpur, then Chief of Dasmesh Regiment, reportedly on condition that 'Shahpur' would liquidate the person allegedly responsible for information given to the police which led to the killing of her husband Toofan Singh. Later, when Balwinder Shahpur suspected her of infidelity/or 'illicit' relations with another "terrorist", as our respondents believed, he "cut her into pieces". Meanwhile the suspected informers relating to

Table XVI: Marital Status of the Terrorists (Police Districtwise)

Sr. No.	Marital Status	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1	Married	24	20	35	19	98 (30.34)
2	Unmarried	46	57	77	45	225 (69.66)
	Total	70	77	112	64	323 (100)

Toofan Singh's killing had been similarly "cut into pieces" by Shahpur's comrades. *Totey totey kar ke marya* (killed by cutting limb by limb) appeared an expression common to the Sikh peasantry in a revenge killing as punishment for dishonour. The respondents in two important villages referred to sexual exploits of the "boys" who had made several homes their "addas" (centres for night stay). A case of an adjoining village was identified as the one which policemen and terrorists visited by turn leading to suspicion and finally the murder of that woman by the terrorists.

The emerging picture of the fighters for Khalistan points to the predominance of virtual social dropouts who came into the business of terrorism for their own personal reasons of adventure, and making money. "Shaukia" - out of fun/fondness was a telling phrase that was often used at least for those who joined the movement after 1987. Hardly 3% were found to have taken to violence out of anger against some kind of injustice. Over 65% came from the large families of landless labourers, marginal and small farmers; most of the young men of less than 22 years of age and 'unemployable' in the white-collar job market. Because of little or no formal education and perhaps because they were not well equipped or well advised for self employment, terrorism provided to them a promising opening. No one, including the leaders of various organisations (barring two boys) came from a well-to-do family. Twenty five percent of them were identified by their own people as vagabonds or riff-raff among what was described as *mandheer ral gayee see*. No wonder that a high incidence of indulgence in forced sex was reported by the people. Around 82 per cent of the "boys" in our area were

The Fighters

Sikh Jats by caste; the post-Green Revolution crop disinclined to do the lowly manual labour even on their own farms. Kinship connections, 45 of them being real brothers, were prominent. The ground reality was at odds with the general perception that it were the educated unemployed who took to violence. Virtually none appeared to have had a political or religious orientation or was concerned with issues of injustice with the Sikhs and the problems facing the agriculturist farmers which were normally associated with the "Punjab Crisis". The definition provided by the Government of India to these "fighters" as secessionists appeared, in retrospect, to be equally far-fetched.

Notes

¹Joginder Singh, *Sikh Resurgence*, National Book Organisation, Delhi, 1997. Joginder Singh's data is largely based on the 1931 Census of India. However, the proportions have remained the same as there was less likelihood of any demographic interruption.

²See, for instance, Charles A. Russel and Bowman H. Miller, "Profile of A Terrorist", in Freedman Lawrence and Alexander Yonah (eds.) *Perspectives on Terrorism*, IIPC, New Delhi, 1985 and Patricia G. Steinhoff, "The Portrait of a Terrorist", *Asian Survey* XVI: 9 (September 1976).

³See Joyce Pettigrew's argument in *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of the State and Guerrilla Violence*, Zed Books, London, pp. 4 and 139.

⁴The names in this case have been changed by us.

⁵The name of the girl has been changed.

3

Villages During Terrorism

In this chapter we propose to examine our villages in terms of their general location in the terrorist violence. The purpose is to look for connections between the occurrence of terrorism and its setting. The first part deals with the quantitative information which includes certain common and not so common features of the villages and the violence by the terrorists in these villages. The narration of certain cases is taken up in the second part, in order to illustrate some aspects and a back up is provided through qualitative data.

Our discussion in Chapter 2 was focussed on those terrorists who belonged to the villages under study. But their operations were not confined to their own villages. The area of their major activities lay, in many cases, outside their own villages. So we include here those activities also which had been undertaken by the terrorists who did not belong to these villages. For example, a well-known terrorist Sukhdev Singh, of village Jhamke, a Lieutenant General of KCF, and his band carried out a number of terrorist activities in the village Udhoke. Since Udhoke was one of the villages studied, his actions would form part of our discussion here. Similarly, Balwinder Singh of Shahpur and Joga Singh of Khanpur villages (which were not a part of our study) remained largely active in Butala. Their activities in the villages of our study are discussed in this chapter. Some of the significant issues such as forced migration and organized resistance to terrorism in our villages have been taken up in separate chapters. Narration of cases and anecdotal evidence available from our villages has, however, been restricted in order to keep the focus on major aspects.

I. Villages and Terrorist Action

References to some dimensions of the villages studied have been made in the earlier chapters. Some other important aspects may be described here. One relates to the division of the village population between scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes, and another to the number and types of religious places in the villages. The percentage of the scheduled castes in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts was 28.00 and 24.70 respectively. It is interesting to note that with the exception of Miran Kot (22.88%) and Gharyala (20.27%) all villages of district Amritsar in our study had a higher proportion of the scheduled castes than the district average. Village Thande, for example, had a Scheduled Caste population of 43% and Harsha Chhina 38%. On the other hand, in Gurdaspur district, with the exception of Ghasitpur (29.51%), all villages had a lower proportion than the district average. An extreme case was that of Dayalgarh which had as low as 2.68 per cent population of Scheduled Castes due to the large scale conversion of the former untouchables to Christianity. Christians have been classified in Punjab as one of the backward classes. (A detailed picture is available in Table XVII) It is also important to note that the villagers' view of the profile of their own village was normally presented in terms of caste and sub-caste categories of households (*ghar*). For example in one of our villages the description, wherein practically each one of the 9 member group of respondents volunteered to give the information in our first meeting, proceeded as under:

Total households (families) about 500. Mazhbi households - about 140 families; One *mohalla* (street) *Teli, Darzi, Lohar, Nai* households (Oilseller, tailor, blacksmith, barber castes households) about 15 families; Arora Sikh - 5 families; Chhimba Singh (Calico-printer sub-caste group of Sikhs) — 12 families.

Table XVII: Total population of the Scheduled Casts and their proportion in each Village (1991 Census)

Sr. No.	Police District	Village	Scheduled Castes Population	Percentage of the total Population	
I.	Amritsar	1. Basarke	820	35.22	
		2. Harsha Chhina	1991	38.00	
		3. Jheeta Kalan	547	34.75	
		4. Miran Kot	764	22.88	
		5. Thande	757	43.23	
		6. Sultanwind	Urban		
		7. Wadali Guru	Urban		
II.	Majitha	1. Butala	2310	36.51	
		2. Kaleke	805	35.57	
		3. Mattewal	630	27.68	
		4. Sathiala	2241	30.94	
		5. Sehnsara	1524	38.07	
		6. Vadala Kalan	1226	29.21	
		7. Vadala Veerum	1126	29.10	
III.	Taran Taran	1. Bagrian	882	35.56	
		2. Gharyala	1307	20.27	
		3. Mianwind	673	33.85	
		4. Naushera Pannuan	2063	34.61	
		5. Rataual	877	32.42	
		6. Sur Singh	2839	33.44	
		7. Bhikhiwind	Urban		
IV.	Batala	1. Butter Kalan	289	20.75	
		2. Cheema Khudi	552	21.74	
		3. Dayalgarh	56	2.68	
		4. Ghasitpur	352	29.51	
		5. Kashtiwai	135	10.71	
		6. Khojala	709	30.71	
		7. Udhoke	1000	39.31	

Bahman (Brahmin) - there were 5 families earlier, now one is left;

Khatri Monay (Khatri, clean shaven to distinguish them from Khatri Sikhs) 5 households;

Sahnsi - 2, *Mirasi* 2, *Mochi* 1.

The rest it was assumed were Jat households. It did not require a mention. Only when you enquired about the Jat families they would say, "all the rest were Jats". Then someone adds: "All Jats are Chahal; one family of Randhawas".

What were the consequences of such a caste composition and distinctions for terrorism? This is a moot question which would be examined in the subsequent pages.

The second dimension on which quantitative information appeared significant related to the number and kinds of religious places in the villages. Their prominent presence in large numbers drew instant notice. As many as 302 such places were listed in the 28 villages including those which are now included in urban areas. (See Table-XVIII). Expectedly the Gurdwaras, 213 in number were the most numerous. The terrorists used such religious places for shelter or short stay and often for announcing commands for the public on the loudspeakers. Occasionally the priest was resourceful, as for instance in Kashtiwai, in recruiting young boys for the movement. The largest number of Gurdwaras in any village to be found was 28 in Sur Singh which had a total population of 8491, over 33 per cent of whom belonged to the Scheduled Castes. In addition to the presence of some historical Gurdwaras, as this region remained the hub of Sikh religious activities, there were many others which reflected the internal structure and dynamics of the Sikh community in the village. Each village was invariably divided into various *pattis*, an equivalent of *mohalla* or locality. However, each *patti* consisted of single caste households. Thus there were separate *pattis* of Jats, Tarkhans, and Mazhbis. It is generally argued in the present context that such Gurdwaras also served as places for social functions. However, separate Gurdwaras for a separate *patti*, in effect, for a separate caste conglomeration, pointed to the caste dynamics in religious affairs as also to the marking of social distinctions.

Table XVIII: Religious Places (Police District-wise)

Sr. No.	Religious	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Gurdwara	59	53	72	29	213 (70.53)
2.	Temple	10	8	7	1	26 (8.61)
3.	Church	-	-	-	2	2 (0.66)
4.	Mosque	-	1	-	-	1 (0.33)
5.	Dera	4	4	4	2	14 (4.64)
6.	Pir's Mazar	10	5	12	8	35 (11.60)
7.	Nishan Sahib by Terrorists	2	3	2	2	9 (2.98)
8.	Gurdwara by Terrorists	1	-	1	-	2 (0.66)
Total		86 (24.48)	74 (24.50)	98 (32.45)	44 (14.57)	302 (100)

The presence of Pir's Mazar, visited by large numbers of devotees from Hindu and Sikh communities, on the other hand, symbolised a continuity in the composite folk religious tradition of Punjab even fifty years after the Muslims left this region. Such places, a total of 35 in our villages, were second in number after the Gurdwaras.

What drew the attention of a visitor was a Gurdwara constructed by the efforts of the terrorists (or a *Nishan Sahib*, the sacred flag of the Sikhs, on a high pole), raised in memory of a slain terrorist of the village. In Naushehra Pannuan, for example, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, "General" (Chief) of BTFK, started construction of a new Gurdwara. The process stopped immediately after his death in an "encounter" with the police. More noticeable was the "Nishan Sahib", installed in several villages, in anticipation of the construction of a Gurdwara at that place. It has been a somewhat common

method of announcing reservation of public or even private land for the Guru's abode. In this case, more important was the reservation for a memorial of a 'martyr' apparently for the cause of the Guru or "The Panth". The removal of the flag amounted to blasphemy. It may be mentioned, however, that with the exception of one such Nishan Sahib in village Dayalgarh in Batala police district all others have been removed by the police. Designated as 'martyrs' by their comrades, the killed terrorists were sought to be included in the tradition of great martyrs of Sikh history. In the light of this tradition the construction of a Gurdwara was viewed as a significant source of providing legitimacy and status to the leading terrorists, and special status to their living supporters and members of their families. The terrorists could get away with it during the period when they were dominant in these villages. But when the tide turned against them these Nishan Sahibs came to be perceived differently. In the case of Dayalgarh, the Nishan Sahib was erected on the private property of the family of a terrorist and thus could not be removed.

Of the various activities of the terrorists such as kidnappings, extortions, lootings and killings, only the last could be quantitatively estimated. In all other cases, while there was little disagreement on a very high scale of such activities, a proper count was not possible. In most of these cases, the respondents were not clear, however, about the number of kidnappings for extortion or who looted how much from a particular person or bank. Our respondents came up with inventories of assets built up by the prominent ones, such as Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, for example. His father owned less than one acre of land before he took to the business of terrorism. Then the assets piled up; 17 acres of land, a brick kiln, a big house, a truck, lots of cash and so on. "While making a small payment of 10 rupees at a shop he invariably took out huge bundles of notes to display his wealth", reported an old hand in his village. In certain cases the individuals kidnapped from outside the village were kept in somebody's house in the village. However, fewer individuals were reportedly kidnapped by them from their own villages.

Regarding the persons killed by the terrorists or the police in each village, our respondents almost vied with one another in clearly naming and counting all the cases. Altogether 327 i.e. about 86 per cent of the total of 381 persons killed in these villages by the terrorists were clearly identified by caste, religion and many by other local identifications such as kinship and/or traits. The other 54 were identified by the social position of the killed. Prominent features of terrorism available in the data may well be discussed.

Among the 327 people killed and identified by their religion, 254 (approx. 78%) were Sikhs, 62 (19%) Hindus and 11 (about 4%) Christians. By caste, Jats 186 (57%) were on top of the list of those who were killed in these villages. The next in line were Mazhbis 16% and Brahmins 13%. (See Table XIX). With the exceptions of a few victims who were visiting relatives or friends, all of these persons belonged to the villages of our study. That is why it was possible for our respondents to identify the killed by their caste and religion. It was different with regard to incidents of rape. The respondents volunteered information about cases in which the women of Mazhbis or Kumhars were involved, and less inclined to discuss cases relating to women of Jat families. Yet they mentioned a high incidence in different villages. A prominent government doctor in one village provided a generalised picture of young girls brought for termination of pregnancies from surrounding villages every week and in deference to social honour referring the cases from that particular village to private hospitals/clinics in Amritsar city.

The religion and caste of the terrorists' victims raised a question regarding the ideology and practice of this movement. Were such actions in tune with the objectives of the movement? Had the activities been in accordance with the goal of the movement, wouldn't Hindus—Brahmins or Khatri—have been major targets rather than Sikhs, particularly Jats? Is it that the "renegades" or "opponents" of the movement were identified as the first major enemies who needed to be killed? The respondents were asked about the cases of the people killed in this regard. It was found that the killed included sympathisers or supporters of the movement; many of whom

Table XIX: Caste and Religion of the People killed by the Terrorists (Police District wise)

Sr. No.	Caste/Religion	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total	
1.	Jat Sikh	26 (13.98)	48 (25.81)	58 (31.18)	54 (29.03)	186 (56.88)	(100)
2.	Khatri Sikh	2 (66.67)	1 (33.33)	-	-	3 (0.91)	(100)
3.	Ramgarhia Sikh	-	-	-	1	1 (0.31)	(100)
4.	Suniara Sikh	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (0.31)	(100)
5.	Chhimba Sikh	-	2 (100)	-	-	2 (0.61)	(100)
6.	Kumhar Sikh	4 (100)	-	-	-	4 (1.22)	(100)
7.	Jheer Sikh	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	4 (1.22)	(100)
8.	Sansi Sikh	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (0.31)	(100)
9.	Mazhbi Sikh	9 (17.31)	16 (30.77)	15 (28.85)	12 (23.07)	52 (15.90)	(100)
10.	Brahmin Hindu	13 (29.55)	18 (40.91)	9 (20.45)	4 (9.09)	44 (13.46)	(100)
11.	Khatri Hindu	-	-	13 (100)	-	13 (3.98)	(100)
12.	Bania Hindu	1 (25.00)	3 (75.00)	-	-	4 (1.22)	(100)
13.	Bazigar Hindu	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (0.31)	(100)
14.	Christian/Masih	-	-	10 (90.91)	1 (9.09)	11 (3.36)	(100)
15.	Total	56 (17.13)	89 (27.22)	106 (32.41)	76 (23.24)	327 (100)	(100)

* Row-wise percentages; the last column shows the column-wise percentage.

had given shelter to the terrorists or served them in other ways. Not many were suspected to be opponents of the terrorists in the ideological sense of the term. Respondents in

at least one third of the villages confirmed that those who tended to show appreciation or sympathy for the terrorists were more often the victims as against those who were known to be opposed to the terrorists. On the other hand, one could make some sense why a larger number of Hindus in these villages were not chosen to be killed. There were, of course, well known cases elsewhere of the killings of the Hindu passengers travelling in a bus, often after proper identification and after separating them from the Sikhs. That had great symbolic effect manifesting propaganda by deed. So was the impact of the killing of Hindus in our villages. Yet Hindus were not specifically targetted in these villages to the extent that the others were. Perhaps the fighters aimed largely at creating such conditions as would force Hindus to leave the villages where they had been living for generations. This actually happened following the killing of some Hindu families as we will see in Chapter 5.

But how do we explain the fact that the Jats constituted a majority of the victims? Does it conform to the logic of the movement? To an extent, no. If we cannot locate the reasons for explanation of these killings in the ideology and goal of struggle for a Sikh State or Khalistan, we need to look for causes elsewhere. We may recall that among the terrorists in our villages the Jats constituted a preponderant majority of 82 per cent. It may also be useful to recall that the Jats constituted an overwhelming majority in our villages and that more than two thirds of the total population of the Sikhs were Jats. That the participants and victims were largely in accordance with their preponderance in rural population cannot pass for an explanation. Upon closer investigation it was found that the inter-family rivalry, inter-gang rivalry, suspicion of betrayal, and notions of revenge or vendetta were the major reasons for the killings. In any case that came out to be the ruling perception among our respondents. The degree of killings of the Jats indicated that such conditions were all pervading. Some of these aspects have been taken up in the second part of the chapter. It may be pointed out however, that on the basis of certain indicators available during our meetings with the groups of respondents, one could notice the element of family disputes as a major determinant. The nature of

organisational affiliation of the terrorists provided some clues. In the villages where the terrorists had got affiliated with more than one different organisations it was an almost clear indication that there could be a history of inter family conflict in the village. This needed investigation. We were rarely proved wrong. The exceptions existed only in the form of lack of simultaneity, i.e. where there was a time sequence of terrorists joining different organisations at different times. That did not, however, mean that all families involved in feuds, contributed or could have contributed a member to terrorism to settle personal scores. There were exceptions to the rule. In Sur Singh village, for example, Guran Singh and his son eliminated a whole family. Only one member, a son, escaped. The survivor preferred to migrate to the city for he was doing a government job.

The data on the killings of the Jat Sikhs by the terrorists tended to suggest that one cannot ignore the internal dynamics of this caste while trying to make sense of the terrorist movement in Punjab. In Dyalgarh, for example, a prominent landlord, apparently friendly with the Area Commander of one of the organisations, told us about the problem which a commander faced in keeping his flock in control. Among the 40 odd members under his control, each one was a master of his will and had modern weapons. "How can I control their activities?", he is reported to have asked his benefactor.

The evidence on socio-economic background of the terrorists (Chapter 2) pointed to class differentiation within the caste. Economic inequalities among the Jats existed earlier too, but the prevalent incidence and nature of inequalities which emerged after the experience of the Green Revolution were different. The sub-division of land holdings and the changes in the work culture put a large number of young persons of the peasant proprietary caste at the periphery of the social relations. The increasing role of capital in agriculture widened the gap between the classes of peasants. That, however, did not result in a manifest class conflict within the landowning Jat Caste, though it was in many cases the cause of conflict with the Mazhbi agricultural working class. The advent of "consumer culture" sharpened the perceptions of differentiation within the caste as also the urge for short

circuiting recourse to accumulation. This influenced the militant discourse of a section of the religious leaders as also the not so religious in different ways. An inclination for quick acquisition of money and property by individual terrorists was noticed as a prominent tendency. On the other hand, the well-to-do landowners and traders regarded the emergent local armed groups as a source of security by payment of protection money in a situation of breakdown of order.

The Mazhbis and the Masihis who had a similar caste status constituted as we have described the second largest number among the victims. Among the Mazhbis were included four women who were stated to have been killed because they were "loose characters". Those who were perceived by the terrorists as police touts became more marked targets. An affiliation of a Mazhbi *kamin* with the family of a landowner with whom a particular terrorist had family rivalry made him a more likely victim. In a shootout incident in Sur Singh, for example, a Mazhbi was accompanying the Jat landowner who was the primary target. The Mazhbi was killed along with him. The killing of such a Mazhbi as a soft substitute was not uncommon. The cultural formation involving the relationship between the Jat who is a landowner and Mazhbi who is a landless worker has been described in the Introduction.

So far as the police districtwise variations are concerned, we find that more Hindus were killed in the villages of Tarn Taran and Majitha police districts. In all other cases, except the killings of Mazhbi/Masih, there was a uniform pattern. Overall, Tarn Taran topped the list of the killed in the area of our study. This finding was in accordance with the general perception that this police district was the most 'disturbed'.

The social position of the persons whose caste and religion were not known (could be Sikhs or Hindus), but who had been killed in the territory of the villages studied, is given in Table XX. These were identified as police and CRPF personnel, migrant labourers or simply "terrorists" killed by other terrorists. Among them the police and CRPF personnel constituted over 72 per cent of the total. It seemed natural that the men of the police force deployed for the suppression of terrorism would be the targets. Thus, the occurrence of 'encounters' between the police and the terrorists was inevitable.

Table XX: Social position of the people whose caste/ religion is not known but killed by the terrorists (Police District wise)

Sr. No.	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1. Police Personnel	1	8	14	-	23 (42.59)
2. CRPF Personnel	3	10	3	-	16 (29.63)
3. Migrant Labourers	1	1	2	-	4 (7.41)
4. Terrorists	1	-	-	4	5 (9.26)
5. Now Known	5	1	-	-	6 (11.11)
Total	11 (20.37)	20 (37.04)	19 (35.19)	4 (7.40)	54 (100)

It was evident that the terrorist movement had pre-organisational character. Groups based on personal following which emerged in the wake of opposition to the state power were shaped by the dynamics of the customary patterns of allegiance and enmity. As the movement prolonged, the number of organisations multiplied. Out of ten organisations in the area of our study, killings were attributed to eight terrorist organisations. The data on the number of persons identified as killed by a particular organisation showed that KCF (Z) and KCF (Panjwar) were reported to have killed the largest number of persons in our villages (See Table XXI). The Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK-M) and Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) were the other prominent organisations. These four organisations were the most active in both Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. However, we found certain noticeable patterns in the activities of these organisations. Each of the organisations had distinct pockets of influence and operation. As already described the BKI was, for example, active in certain villages of the Batala police

district and the KCF (P) in specific villages of Tarn Taran and Amritsar police districts.

Table XXI: Sex-wise number of Persons killed by a Militant Organization

Sr. No.	Name of the Organization	Male	Female	Total
1.	KCF(Z)	74	13	87
2.	KCF(P)	74	9	83
3.	BTFK(M)	50	3	53
4.	BTFK(S)	6	2	8
5.	BKI	47	8	55
6.	KLF	44	9	53
7.	Dashmesh Regiment	13	2	15
8.	KLA	9	2	11
9.	Not Known	16	-	16
		333 (87.4%)	48 (12.6%)	381

The women, according to our data, constituted 12.60 per cent of those killed by terrorists in these villages. We have already mentioned that some women were killed by the terrorists because they were accused of being ladies of 'loose character'. It was noticed that even in the cases where our respondents had no independent knowledge or evidence of the charge, none of them appeared to reject or question the allegations against these women. In most of the other cases, they were killed when their families were attacked because their husbands, fathers or brothers had been pronounced as enemies or affiliates of the enemies, by the terrorists. On such a labelling of men, however, our respondents in some cases pronounced the allegation to be patently wrong or that the killing resulted from a particular terrorist's feeling of personal hurt or grouse rather than from any ideological opposition.

A probe into the connection of such killings with the internal dynamics of the villages in Punjab in general appeared necessary. This dynamics is related with the horizontal and vertical integration of castes. Dominated by owner cultivating castes, such as Jat, Saini, Kamboj and Labana the villages in

Punjab had such caste-class configurations as appeared to form hierarchies. The horizontal integration among the Jats had a different kind of dynamics because inter-family conflicts had been further reinforced by the sharpening of class differentials among those belonging to the caste. Much of what is called "the Punjab problem" may be difficult to understand without a sociological study of the terms of the crisis in this leading class differentiated caste group.

Quantitative information alone may be inadequate for understanding the pattern of relations. It may even hide certain significant dimensions in the aggregation of data. Qualitative data through case histories and observations may therefore be necessary and helpful. This constitutes the subject matter of Part II.

II. Three Faces of Terrorist Activities

Only three cases covering as many villages have been taken up for illustration and discussion here. These villages are Basarke Bhaini, Udhoke Kalan and Rataul; one each from the three police divisions of Amritsar districts. Udhoke Kalan covers both the Majitha and Batala police districts since a part of it falls in the administrative district of Gurdaspur. All the three villages acquired prominence during the high tide of terrorism.

1. Basarke-Bhaini

These twin villages are located near the south-western periphery of Amritsar. Basarke has some distinctive features in comparison with all other villages studied. Firstly, this village is numerically dominated by the *Kumhars* who are Sikhs. The second most numerous caste is that of Mazhbi Sikhs. On the other hand the village Bhaini had a preponderance of Jats. There are no clear boundaries demarcating the two. That led to a joint name (two-in-one) of Basarake-Bhaini. Secondly, a large number of men from Basarke go frequently to the city to transport goods by mule-driven carts mostly owned by them. Some young people from the village also own or drive auto-rickshaws in Amritsar. Thirdly, the out-migration of Jats from and in-migration of *Kumhars* shaped the existing composition of the village. There

was another factor in the distinct demographic composition of Basarke. Owing to the proximity to the city many men from outside the village who married women belonging to this village moved here because of greater job opportunities available here than in their own villages situated at a greater distance from the city. A kind of functional matrilineal marriages were taking place among the lower caste and lower class *Kumhars*. The poor Jats were moving out of the village. All Jats settled in the village are landowners. Finally, in the surrounding region there are more than the usual number of brick-kilns. A good part of the land in the village, which means upper layers of the soil measured by feet and acre, was sold to the brick-kiln owners by the landowners. That became a major source of income for them even while retaining ownership of the land. One could generate income even without cultivation of that land.

The story of the terrorist violence in the twin villages leading to the killing of 35 people in all may be largely traceable to and rooted in the above factors. It is centered on the land attached to a graveyard on a mound. This place is known as the *mazaar* of "Pir Baba Shah Dal Wali". It is part of the composite religious tradition of Punjab in which Sufis and their burial places were revered by people belonging to different religions. One of the important actor, in the story was Jagir Singh of this village who took to terrorism and joined KCF (Z) when he was thirty years of age. He was educated upto primary level and was helping his father in farming about ten acres of land. A part of the family's land was adjacent to the mound of Pir Baba's *mazaar*. He had four brothers and three sisters. Jagir Singh's brother Shahbeg Singh who was younger to him by seven years also joined terrorism. Both of them were in Khalistan Commando Force (Zafarwal). Shahbeg Singh rose to be the Area Commander of the organisation and was killed by the police early in 1992 in an "encounter". Jagir Singh, however, surrendered before the police during the same year.

The second character in the story is Giani Piara Singh who used to sell illicit liquor and was known primarily as a police informer. In the vocabulary of the rural areas, he was a "police tout". In other words, he was a low level gangster

who would inform the police about various illegal activities, and served as a "prosecution witness"-in- reserve whenever the police required his services in a court of law. As a result he exercised a certain dubious influence in the village. However, he also controlled the holy place of the sufi saint and the land attached to it known in the village as *theh*, (mound). On every thursday, a considerable number of devotees visited the place to light the earthen lamps and make some offerings. Giani Piara Singh used to have some income from this source.

During the discussion with the group of our respondents in Basarke, it came to our notice that Giani Piara Singh and Jagir Singh used to be friends. It was also observed that most of the farmers including Jagir Singh who owned a piece of land surrounding the *theh*, had gradually encroached on parts of land of the *theh* which was legally attached with the religious shrine. The area of the *theh* was about five acres. The process of encroachment which can also be observed in other villages where there is common or government (public) land was that at the time of every tilling of the land, the farmer would shift the tiller a few inches or feet towards the adjacent land. It remained unnoticed at the time but within a few years a good slice of land got included into his possession. Jagir Singh was accused of grabbing a part of the *theh* land.

When asked about the genesis of terrorist killings in the village, all the people of the village in the group gave the *theh* as the reason for the development of enmity between Jagir Singh and Giani Piara Singh. As the conflict sharpened and factions developed, Jagir Singh joined the KCF (Z) to avenge the accusation or to confront the possibility of an armed threat. Though it is difficult to make Jagir Singh directly responsible, yet the killings of a number of persons in the village by a group belonging to KCF (Z) was generally attributed to the factional conflict between Jagir Singh and Piara Singh. A total of 16 persons were killed by the terrorists' in a series of incidents. All those killed who included ten Jats, three Brahmins, two Kumhars and one Mazhbi belonged to the faction of Piara Singh.

Giani Piara Singh had already secured the protection of the police. Since the late eighties the state had adopted a

counter-insurgency policy according to which it provided arms to those persons who were threatened by the terrorists. The moment Piara Singh received the arms he started threatening the supporters of Jagir Singh. The violence in the village reached its climax on the occasion of the marriage of Jagir Singh's younger brother. Before the marriage party was to depart for the bride's place, Piara Singh reached Jagir Singh's home with his gang. Without any warning they opened fire leading to the death of 19 persons on the spot, including Jagir Singh's father and his son. Most of the persons killed at the spot were close relatives.

This kind of activity could not be defended by the police. Giani Piara Singh was arrested, tried and convicted. He was awarded capital punishment by the Session Judge, but the punishment has not yet been carried out.

2. Udhoke Kalan

This village presents a history of feud and a mosaic of social forces that worked later through the terrorist violence. The location of the village is unique as it is situated at the border of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. Most of the village area is in Amritsar district and falls in the Majitha police district; a part of it is in Batala police district area. But throughout the terrorist phase it was mainly the police under Batala police district which conducted frequent raids in the village. Two of the prominent terrorist leaders belonged to this village, one of whom Chanchal Singh became the chief of Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA).

The story of this village may be started from the seventies when neither the Khalistani ideology nor any religious activism was present. The narrative is confined to Jat Sikhs only.

A well-to-do landowner Tarlok Singh was the *Sarpanch* of the village and one of his close friends Tarsem Singh was a *panch*. The friendship between the two had certain social consequences. Tarlok Singh not only had a strong influence in the village but he also had enemies. Tarsem Singh had a serious dispute with his uncle (elder brother of his father) over sharing of land. His uncle and cousins considered Tarlok Singh as a bigger threat and enemy because of his clout and his support for Tarsem Singh. Another 'enemy' of Tarlok

Singh was a landowner in the adjacent village Jhamke whose son Sukhdev Singh emerged later as an important terrorist leader in the area. Both of these and two other similar cases of family feuds over land contributed to the alliances and rivalries of the recruits to terrorism during the mid 1980s. In 1982, Tarsem Singh's cousin killed Tarsem's friend *Sarpanch* Tarlok Singh. The culprit was tried by the court and punished to life imprisonment.

Following the death of Tarlok Singh, Tarsem Singh succeeded him as the village *Sarpanch* as he belonged to the influential group of Tarlok Singh. With the result he became the most important target of his opponents. By that time Sukhdev Singh Jhamke, whose father had enmity with Tarlok Singh, had become an important leader having a good number of followers recruited from his village. Soon thereafter two successive murders were committed in Udhoke. The first to be killed was Tarsem Singh the new *Sarpanch*. The other killed later, was one Santokh Singh. In the second case the involvement of the terrorists belonging to the village became evident. Some of the subsequent occurrences in late eighties were a direct outcome of these three murders resulting from inter-family disputes.

Our respondents recalled that the first among the boys of Udhoke village to join terrorism was Labh Singh who joined Sital Singh Mattewal's Dashmesh regiment. He was married; had a comfortable life and, as reported, seemed to have no reasons to become a terrorist except perhaps fun and adventure. He was killed in 1991 by the police in an alleged encounter. But in the meanwhile he had initiated a process which led to the joining of 14 other persons belonging to Udhoke in broadly two different organisations. The reasons and motivation for their joining could be linked with the social dynamism of the village.

The most prominent from the village was Chanchal Singh, 20 years of age at the time of joining KCF initially. His family owned four acres of land which was expected to be shared among four brothers. After joining terrorism he married the sister of another well-known terrorist Surjit Singh Penta, Lt. General of BTFK (Manochahal). (Penta consumed cyanide and died during 'Operation Black Thunder' in 1988) His younger

brother Chanan Singh also joined him. Later, Chanchal Singh formed his own organisation named Khalistan Liberation Army. Four more persons of the village, viz. Harbhajan Singh Marwaria, Harbhajan Singh, Harjinder Singh and Bakhshish Singh joined Chanchal Singh.

Whatever might be the motives for all these persons becoming terrorists, our respondents thought that these related mainly to fun and looting. They began to align with the families and individuals opposed to the faction of the deceased Tarlok Singh.

When Sukhdev Singh Jhamke joined Chanchal Singh it sent a danger signal to the family of Tarlok Singh. What were the alternatives before the sons of Tarlok Singh? One was seeking police protection; the other, joining a rival terrorist organisation. The elder son Paramjit Singh, 25 years old, who was married and had two sons and one daughter at that time, joined a rival terrorist group KCF (Zaffarwal). His younger brother Kebu, who was a small contractor, also joined KCF (Z). Another one to join with them was Ranjit Singh who faced a similar threat because of a family dispute. They did not commit any murder in the village. The respondents narrated how Paramjit Singh was captured and killed by the police in cold blood, and then announced his death in an "encounter" with police. Kebu, soon after, surrendered himself before the police.

The village-view of Chanchal Singh centered on his involvement in the land disputes of the village, particularly relating to families inhabiting his *patti*, and its violent results. Those closer to him began to use his services for their personal ends. Joginder Singh and Harjinder Singh, two real brothers were, for example, engaged in a dispute over land. Joginder Singh, reportedly because of vendetta and also in order to grab the latter's land, involved Chanchal Singh in the dispute. As a result, Chanchal Singh, Sukhdev Singh Jhamke and their fellows together killed eight members of Harjinder Singh's family. The killed included a real sister of the two brothers. Joginder Singh later took possession of the entire land.

The second case involved a dispute between another two brothers, Pritam Singh and Makhan Singh. Makhan Singh was close to two of the terrorists Labh Singh and

Harbhajan Singh. He reportedly told them that his brother Pritam Singh was a police informer. Whether that report was true or not, what is known is that Pritam Singh was killed by those terrorists.

The third case was related to Chanchal Singh's own family. His brother Mohinder Singh had occupied four acres of common village land. In addition, he had also been cultivating eight acres of land belonging to other families including that of his brother. He was accused of manipulation and coercion in such deals. The rivalry became sharp when the brothers began to demand the control of land occupied by him. When Mohinder Singh did not budge, Chanchal Singh's group attacked his brother and members of the family. As a result, Mohinder Singh, his wife and their two sons were killed. Another murder which Chanchal Singh's group committed was that of Sulakhan Singh. Enquiries revealed that this murder was related to the old feud with the faction of Tarlok Singh because Sulakhan Singh was a friend of Tarlok Singh's son, Paramjit Singh.

Many more persons had been killed by the terrorists in this village. The villagers were able to count another 8 murders. All, except one of the killed, were non Jats. The information about non Jats killed appeared less newsy. These were also not linked to family feuds over land disputes. The murder of a lone Brahmin, for instance, was not, as the respondents added, a calculated murder: "A terrorist wanted to test his gun".

3. Rataul

This village falls under Tarn Taran police district. It became famous for two reasons. Firstly, in an encounter with the terrorists in this village a DIG of Police, Ajit Singh was killed. Secondly, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, the General (Chief) of BTFK was killed in this village in an encounter with the police. It was the village of Manochahal's father-in-law and was a stronghold of BTFK. We have chosen this village for special focus due to another reason. Some of the occurrences in the village resulted in the split in BTFK. An attempt has been made to trace the history of the split in a major terrorist organisation.

Rataul is a typical village in the sense that landowning caste of Jats is numerically the largest, followed by Mazhbis. Kumhar Sikhs constitute the third position. A total of 12 persons of this village were identified as having joined terrorism; all were affiliated with the BTFK Manochahal group. Gurbachan Singh Manochahal had strong influence in the village. According to our respondents and the police reports, he used this village as a shield and shelter. When the police came to know about it, an attack was launched leading to a prolonged exchange of fire in an encounter with the terrorists which continued for 72 hours. It resulted in the death of twelve policemen, seven terrorists and one villager. One of the policemen killed was a Deputy Inspector General of Punjab Police, Ajit Singh.

Though the BTFK men killed some persons in the village including Umrao Singh, Sarpanch of the village, yet Manochahal was known to have taken special care that no harm was done to the people in the village. Naushera Pannuan, the village of his mother, was another such special village where all the terrorists belonged to BTFK. The terrorists belonging to other organisations were not allowed. This appeared crucial for his reputation and acceptance in the village. The common man was spared from unnecessary harassment. Therefore, the village people resented the behaviour and activities of one of the members of BTFK, named Kaku who began to rob the well-to-do people and became notorious in the village. Reportedly when Manochahal came to know about it, he got very angry and the leadership of the BTFK ordered the liquidation of Kaku. There hangs a story. This came out vividly in our meetings with our respondents and may be narrated as under.

A person who negotiated with the BTFK leadership including Manochahal himself, to save Kaku's life was his friend Dharam Singh. Dharam Singh stood a surety for Kaku's good behaviour in future and Kaku was asked to pay a fine of Rs. 25,000. However, Kaku could not pay the money till the deadline. The BTFK therefore asked Dharam Singh to pay the amount. As Kaku fled the scene, Dharam Singh became the focus of BTFK's attention. But Dharam Singh also could not pay the amount. The question now was of violation of the

guarantee or trust. One night a group of BTFK men reached Dharam Singh's farm house, forced the men and women to come out and punished them by asking them to keep standing in the village pond for the whole night. This happened in the month of December. Another day was fixed for the payment and the family members were told to keep the money ready.

Dharam Singh and his family dreaded the next punishment. Ultimately, he contacted Sukhwinder Singh Sangha another well known terrorist of the same outfit BTFK (Manochahal). In retrospect it seemed that Sangha was not aware of this case. Dharam Singh was reportedly able to convince Sangha that there was a threat to his family and that some looters were coming to extort money from them. On the appointed day, Sangha reached Dharam Singh's house alongwith another comrade and hid himself at a vantage point. About ten O'clock in the night, two representatives of Manochahal arrived to get the money. Perhaps, as our respondents believed, Sangha identified the intruders as Mohinder Singh, younger brother of Manochahal and Dr. Gurnam Singh Butter, both belonging to his organisation. Sangha was sitting in the dark and immediately shot at Mohinder Singh who died on the spot, Gurnam Singh managed to escape.

It was alleged that Sangha had resentment against Mohinder Singh because instead of Sangha, Manochahal had made his own brother the Area Commander of BTFK. So Sangha was believed to have killed Mohinder Singh with a clear intent. When Gurnam Singh told the entire story to Manochahal, the latter took the matter to the chief of the Damdami Taksal at Chowk Mehta which was an apex centre of the Khalistan movement, perhaps considered to be above the Panthic Committee. Sangha was called and he reportedly accused Dharam Singh of misinformation. But Manochahal was not convinced since Sangha knew Mohinder Singh well. Before the issue could be resolved Sangha escaped from the Taksal headquarters. Later he formed his own organisation BTFK (Sangha). The mere fact that the above case against Sukhwinder Singh Sangha was taken to the Damdami Taksal may suggest 'General' Manochahal's dilemma as the Chief. Perhaps he recognised the political cost of precipitate action

against Sangha. However, after a few days of this occurrence, Manochahal killed four members of the family of Dharam Singh. Vendetta killing of soft targets, so natural to such actors, was evidently considered appropriate against Dharam Singh and symbolically against Sangha.

The data and the illustrative cases discussed above underline the significance of the social dynamics which is rooted in the agrarian relations and rural society of Punjab and contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon of terrorist violence. Important to the sociological context is the domination of the Jat community and its social traditions. The deepening of class differentials and the consumer culture among these "possessive individuals" tended to bring terrorism in the service of their struggle for social dominance and political power.

Pettigrew's evidence showed that after this event one of Manochahal's major objectives related to liquidation of Sangha and his protege Satnam Singh of Harsha Chhina. Sangha was allegedly liquidated at Manochahal's behest.¹

In sum, the village level reality was qualitatively distinct from that of the macro-level discourse. In our villages the terrorist action got interwoven with the social and political dynamics of the local character. In this regard caste relations played a significant role, particularly in mapping the actions of Mazhbis whose close and traditional links with the Jat landowners had significance. In terms of caste dynamics it is obvious that the Jats became the main targets, but their becoming so had non-ideological reasons. Inter-family rivalry and dispute over land were two major non-ideological factors which led to various murders. Rivalry among the terrorists and the related or unrelated presence of police informers in their midst were other reasons for the deaths. It seems that Jats who were mainly the terrorists as well as the victims constituted the most important factor in the nature of terrorism; its course and its scale.

Notes

¹Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence*, Zed Book, London, pp. 91-92.

4

The State and Counter-Terrorism

It is one of the continuing dilemmas of democratic states whether or not terrorism can be fought without altering the fabric of normal democratic legal structures and procedures. It was considered necessary to be careful as Stansfield Turner, former Director of US Intelligence Agency, emphasised during the proceedings of the US Task Force on combatting terrorism that "in the name of defeating terrorism we don't become terrorists".¹ A whole corpus of what may be described as "counter-insurgency" or "counter-terrorism" literature is now available.² Terrorist crime is viewed as a special kind of crime which required an apparatus and procedure different from the normal to deal with it.

The central weapon of terrorism is fear and as a Scottish scholar Wilkinson emphasised, its wider target is the public. So the victims may largely be noncombatants who are soft targets and the terrorist actions may have the most dramatic intimidating effect. Their actions are unpredictable. Terrorism also denies to the state's prosecuting agency hard evidence; evidence that would stand up in a court. It tends to operate by intimidation of the police and the magistracy, as also by penetration in their ranks which is the greatest scourge of the state. When its avowed purpose is separatism, it is taken as a threat to the security of the state. The state is therefore inclined to view it as anti-national "warfare" rather than crime. But it is not fought in the open. Terrorism thrives under the cover of public support. That support may be the result of fear and intimidation or it may be based on sympathy with the cause and appreciation for the heroism of those taking on the state. The social construction of the struggle, the cause for which the terrorists claim to be fighting, plays a

crucial role in winning public support. The prevalence of anti-state militancy in a community, of which this may be the product, is the life blood of separatist terrorism. If the struggle is projected as one for a religious cause, the insulation against state penetration may be stronger. The consequent denial of the required intelligence to the state's agencies is its major strategic weapon. Equally significant is the clandestine support from across the border. Another crucial element is the media's witting, unwitting or coerced publicity of terrorist proclamations and deeds. Propaganda is the very oxygen for its sway and success.

The counter-insurgency measures by the state are aimed at all the above mentioned sources of support and cover for the terrorists. The present chapter focuses on the interaction and interrelation between the state and Khalistan terrorism.

The Government of India defined the problem in 1984 as "the maturing of a secessionist and anti-national movement".³ The 1985 Accord with Longowal indicated a shift in such perceptions. Even the Akali leaders described it as "the end of the era of confrontation". But the militants felt cheated or betrayed. They did not consider that the problem related to issues of water, transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and release of Jodhpur detainees. The question was not of redressal of some grievances, but of creating a separate sovereign state. The Akali signatories of the Accord were regarded as "traitors". Therefore, Sant Longowal was liquidated. The massive mandate the Akali Dal received for its agenda of peace and negotiated settlement in the 1985 Assembly election was an anathema to them. They seemed to have a fundamental distaste for and a fear of people's democratic verdict. On the other hand, as it appeared, the ruling perception of the state's intelligence agencies had not basically altered. Narayanan noticed the choice of words "they" and "us" in his conversation with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's official advisers. The "People analysing the Punjab problem deliberately hide, or inadvertently ignore one basic historical fact: Sikh separatism", remarked one of them and traced the sentiment back to Anglo-Sikh wars, the Gurdwara agitation, etc.⁴

The "Proclamation of Khalistan", on the other hand, described the struggle as akin to a "total war" against the Indian State, though it desisted from a formal declaration of such a war. The main tactical weapon for the insurgents was terrorism or guerrilla war. J.F. Ribeiro, the Director General of Punjab Police 1986-88, known for his infamous "bullet for bullet" remark, described it as a "battle". Policy prescription and the nature of state intervention followed the definition of the problem. A flawed perception and definition could order measures and force which were excessive, extra legal and counter productive.

It may be understood that the demographic and political profile of Punjab was a major factor against the success of terrorism. The Hindus who were ideologically excluded from the movement constituted about 37 per cent of the population of Punjab. About 20 per cent of Sikhs were settled outside Punjab. In the contemporary context, it was not possible to create conditions similar to those of 1947 when millions of people crossed the border or died in communal carnage. Secondly, though the Sikh community was feeling widely alienated after the events of 1984, it did not mean the community was a homogeneous unit or that its vast numbers were behind the struggle for Khalistan. The leaders of the Akali Dal(s), the most dominant political voice of the Sikhs, remained ambivalent towards it. Some of the important leaders had openly condemned it. The Sikhs, belonging to other political parties categorically opposed the demand as anti national and asked for strong state action against its protagonists. Practically all the lower caste Sikhs were opposed to it. So were many of the religious heads of various sects having considerable following in the community. On top of all this, the terrorists were themselves a divided lot. Thus, it was highly doubtful and erroneous at any point of time to take a position whereby terrorism could be understood as Sikh separatism versus the Indian state.

As the terrorist violence escalated in Punjab there were, however, periods when all political parties and other sections opposed to terrorism were marginalised in the eyes of the Sikh masses, as for example, after the Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. This happened not due to the doings

of militants as such but largely as a consequence of the actions of the state and the alleged involvement of the then ruling party in the riots. In any case it was evident that the nature of intervention made by the Government of India and its security forces became a crucial determinant of the shifts in the nature and course of the struggle. It also determined which section of Sikh political class would be privileged by it to gain ascendancy.⁵ However, there were obvious limits to the power and choice of action by the state agencies since they were required to uphold the law and its constitutional obligations relating to the fundamental rights of the citizens.

It is in this context that the counter insurgency and anti-terrorist measures adopted by the Indian State need to be examined. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part we describe the role of Indian State on the basis of secondary sources. In the second part we discuss the data and certain illustrative cases relating to our field experience in the villages of our study.

I

In retrospect it seems that the handling of the terrorist movement on the part of the state was lacking perspective as well as effectiveness. It seemed particularly so when a low level violence with high emphasis on the distinctness of the Khalsa identity began from 1978 leading upto Operation Blue Star. This has been discussed in Chapter I. Despite the massive mandate in favour of the democratic alternative to violence in the 1985 Assembly election, the Barnala government was not allowed to consolidate its position to win over and deal effectively with such elements as were "sulking and feeling injured to the core". Rajiv Gandhi's government at the Centre either did not have a clear agenda or had a dubious secret agenda. It is not known whether serious notice was taken when the runaway undergrounds of "Operation Blue Star" and "Operation Woodrose" returned from Pakistan or their other hideouts to coalesce together under the command of the Damdami Taksal. As the militants constituted a Panthic Committee, entered the Golden Temple, replaced all religious appointees of the SGPC and also proclaimed the formation of Khalistan, the government agencies appeared to

have been shaken out of the existing weak balance. All political leadership in the community stood discredited at that time. It appeared to be beyond the capacity of the police force to deal with the difficult situation. The situation was summed up by Governor Siddharth Shankar Ray as under:

There is a Government in Punjab, but it is not in Chandigarh. It is in Amritsar. Rooms No. 45, 47, 48 of Guru Nanak Niwas. Like the Jizhia of the Moghul day, the militants are sending show cause notices to people demanding money. These people, both Sikhs and Hindus, do not go to the police or to the D.C. They straight go to the militants, pay the money and go off. The situation is simply this. If the terrorists want something done; it is done; if they don't want something to happen, it is blocked.⁶

The Panchayats, most of the bureaucracy and the judiciary too, were to a large extent successfully infiltrated or cowed down by the terrorists and their sympathisers. The nature of state intervention was reflected in the imposition of President's rule in the state which was continued for 5 years. Other extraordinary measures taken by the state may be seen as follows:

1. Extra-ordinary Criminal Laws

These allowed the police to operate more or less unhindered by normal constitutional legal constraints. Important among such measures were the National Security Act with further amendments to enable the government to detain any person without trial for 4 years and the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act of 1984, which allowed *in camera* trial of suspected terrorists. The infamous TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act allowed the police to use "confessions" during police interrogation as evidence. Further, if it was proved "that the accused had made a confession of the offence to any person other than a police officer", the Designated Court "shall presume the guilt of the accused" (Section 21).⁷ It could award death sentence for terrorist crimes involving murder. A former DGP K.S. Dhillon stressed recently that this enactment was never really made use of in the courts. Actually it only meant more power to the police and an assault on the freedom of the common

man.⁸ The official figure of the suspects detained without trial upto 1993 in Punjab rose upto 14,457. The 59th Amendment of the Constitution in 1989 practically abrogated the fundamental right to life and liberty for the suspects. The Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh Special Powers) Act gave the security forces practically an immunity from prosecution.

2. Setting up Vigilante Groups

These included Police supported constitution of outfits consisting of dismissed policemen and terrorists-turned approvers, for example the "Alam Sena," created by SSP Amritsar Mohammad Izhar Alam and the "Black Cats". It became difficult to identify which terrorist action was committed by which organisation as invariably the public credit for action was taken or given to one of the known terrorist gangs.⁸

3. Infiltration into Terrorist Organisations

Given the intelligence available about the character, motives and lust for power, money and flesh among the terrorists, infiltration into their organisations by the state's agents was not very difficult. Undercover agents succeeded in accentuating and manipulating distrust leading to inter-gang rivalries and killings among the terrorists. The existing interpersonal problems of *Sardari* (dominance), and mercenary interests of criminals-turned-Khalistani terrorists were exploited to the maximum. The divisions were reflected in the constitution of 4 competing Panthic Committees (five, according to KPS Gill), three sets of *Singh Sahibs*, (the religious appointees of the Golden Temple and Akal Takht) and over 160, more or less autonomously operating and competing outfits. Relatives of Sant Bhindranwale, Jasbir Singh Rode, who was appointed *Jathedar* of Akal Takht by the "Panthic Committee in 1986, and Gurjit Singh of AISSF came to be particularly suspected of acting as Government agents. "Rode's betrayal" became a primary concern after he was released from jail in February 1988. Wassan Singh Zafarwal claimed that their Panthic Committee had removed both Rode and Gurjit Singh from their positions.⁹

After Operation Black Thunder in May 1988, the ideological mouthpiece of militants, *Sant Sipahi* cried about the utter confusion because of the designs of Panthic traitors and government agents who had "destroyed the movement." The *dehshatvadi* (terrorists) centred in the Golden Temple were condemned as dangerous for the Sikh community. *Panthak Gaddar te Sarkari Agent Kaun?* (Who are Sikh traitors and government agents?) became a major question. It became difficult to make a distinction between the two. *Laggda hai aes hamam vich sarey hee ikko jehey hun, koi kisey ton pichhey nahin* (It seems in this "bath", all are the same. None is second to the other).¹⁰ So much so that the declaration of Khalistan was itself considered to be a game played by the government to make a fool of the Sikhs.¹¹ Mutual liquidation by gangs followed soon after.

4. "Operation Black Thunder"

A meticulously planned and televised operation to flush out the terrorists from the Golden Temple in May 1988, proved a master stroke for the demoralised police force. The ignominy of surrender by the terrorists coming out with raised hands, the evidence of desecration of the temple and the later discovery of 57 dead bodies from under the debris of the demolished Akal Takht caused massive revulsion and shame in the Sikh community against Khalistani terrorists.

5. Increase of Strength and Improvement in Organisation of Security Forces

The strength of Punjab police force was raised from around 35000 in 1989 to more than 70,000 in 1993. In addition, as the DGP Punjab reported, 15000 troops and 40,000 paramilitary men were engaged in the "anti terrorist offensive".¹² A reorganisation was reflected in the constitution of "police districts", each headed by an officer of the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police, and making the police organisation largely independent of the control of civil administration. Amritsar district was divided into three—Amritsar, Majitha and Tarn Taran—in April 1988.

6. Measures to Reduce Outside Aid to the Terrorists

Cutting external support of "safe havens" and traffic in arms was of critical importance. Besides the sealing of the

border, Operation Rakshak I launched by the Army in May 1990 and Operation Rakshak II towards the end of 1991 had two objectives: one, to effectively seal the cross border movement and supply of arms and second, establishing mutual trust between the security forces and the people in the border districts through public contact *darbars* and meaningful social service in the area. The diplomatic efforts for Extradition Treaties signed with UK and Canada and winning greater support from other western countries in curbing the terrorist crime was another step.

7. Rewards, Promotions for Apprehension of Terrorists and Extra-Judicial Killings

The Police force in Punjab, as a retired senior officer observed, was known for its "servility and oppression".¹³ Making it an effective instrument seemed to require appropriate incentives. That it indulged in staging "fake encounters" was acknowledged by the Punjab Governor when he publicly appealed to the Police officers "to stop fake encounters". An important innovation, however, was an official order of the Director General of Police Punjab issued on 30 August 1989 to all district superintendents of police. It promised to the police personnel handsome specific rewards in cash for the "apprehension/liquidation" of 53 specifically described terrorists/extremists. Another similar order was issued on 1 April 1990 but this time it avoided the word "liquidation".¹⁵ Besides financial rewards, quick promotions in rank were promised and given to the killers of the terrorists. In certain cases an officer of the rank of an Inspector gained two out-of-turn promotions in two years, soon becoming the head of that police district. This, as one of the officers told us, on condition of anonymity, led to a haste among lower ranks to liquidate a wanted terrorist, because in case of his arrest the reward was likely to be "grabbed" by some higher officer by killing that terrorist.

Releasing Media from Terrorist Pressure

By 1990, the media which was driven to panic by murders of mediemen, was converted into the greatest source of dominance of the terrorists. Narayanan described the year

1990 as the phase of "Xerocracy". "The Press note from the terrorist organisations became a deadlier weapon than the AK-47 and the remote control bombs". Rule of militant press notes had replaced the rule of law. *Bandhs*, *bhog* ceremonies of fallen *shaheeds*, warnings to particular individuals and the morale-shattering phenomenon called *spashtikarans* (clarifications) by the latter in the press were the order of the day.¹⁶ The then Punjab Governor, General O.P. Malhotra, moved in to support the press by a novel method. In 90 per cent cases he allowed them discretion. In the remaining cases relating to the notices and reports by terrorists, the printed matter was deleted by official censor denying to the terrorists their most powerful platform for propaganda. It allowed the Press to blame their helplessness on censor by the Government. This led to a banishment of such press notes.¹⁷ Observance of *bandhs* stopped. Even the liquidation of the notorious terrorists such as Sukhdev Singh of Babbar Khalsa evoked no *bandhs*. *Bhog* ceremonies of killed terrorists became a tame affair.

Whether he was described as a "saviour" or a "butcher", it was acknowledged that in the decisive battle of the state against terrorism, in consolidation of police strength and restoring its courage and determination, KPS Gill, Punjab's new Director General of Police made all the difference. His understanding was that the situation needed tough even if unjustly harsh image of the police. That was regarded as central for commanding respect and ultimately winning the confidence of the people who were cowed down by the terrorist guns. The sway and dominance of the terrorists was attributed to the ineffective, fearful and demoralised police force. By reorganising the force with firm unity of command, by equipping them with sophisticated weapons, and by promising rewards and promotions, he succeeded in establishing ascendance of the police against the terrorists. A crucial factor that determined the nature of police role related to the political direction. The earlier reports/evidence of government inclination to negotiate with the terrorists—with Jasbir Singh Rode in 1988 and with S.S. Mann and his supporters in 1989-90 and Prime Minister V.P. Singh's overtures to the militants—had created apprehensions in the police

personnel that the next government might well be pro-terrorist. As the data show in Chapter 2, it was in 1990-91 when Chandra Shekhar was the Prime Minister that the assertiveness of police began and the killings of terrorists increased. Later on after the 1991 election the Congress Party at the Centre gave almost a free hand to the DGP. The measures taken for that purpose included the grant of considerable immunity to police men for what was described as "minor delinquencies" such as corruption, extortion, excesses, torture of suspects and even killings. Cases of torture of detainees, combing of whole villages, searches and ill treatment of a large number of innocent people have been recorded by a number of Human Rights groups and media investigations.¹⁸

It may be in order to describe two examples of State dealing with terrorism.

1. A 21 year young Surjit Singh was picked up by the police from his farm house in Valtaha village of Tarn Taran police district on 15 October 1993. After 16 days a Sub-Inspector of Police brought his "body" to the Civil Hospital at Patti. According to the police, this was the body of a militant who was killed in an encounter with the police and the body was brought there for a post-mortem examination. When the policemen left and the doctors began the examination it was discovered that the militant was not dead. Someone recognised that it was Surjit Singh who had been grievously injured. The patient was put on life-saving devices. As the word went out the ASI returned to the hospital with a few constables and forcibly took away the patient, apparently for "better treatment" at Amritsar. After a few hours the body of that person was brought back to the hospital. Now it was surely a dead body for which post-mortem was necessary. A prominent CPI leader Satya Pal Dang wrote to the Press and the State's Governor. The Supreme Court took *suo moto* notice on the basis of the newspaper report and ordered the Punjab Police to present a report.¹⁹ The S.I. was found guilty and punished to life imprisonment.

2. The police of Tarn Taran Police district kidnapped Jaswant Singh Khalra from his residence in Kabir Park in Amritsar on September 7, 1995. He was an Akali Human Rights activist and was at that time investigating the

cremation of unclaimed bodies of the terrorists by the police. It was reported that he was able to record over 2000 cases of "unclaimed bodies" cremated by the police. So far there are no whereabouts of Jaswant Singh Khalra. The eye witnesses claiming that Khalra was murdered by the police have been provided security on court order. The court has ordered that due compensation should be given to his wife.

It is alleged that the arrest of the terrorists by the police for prosecution and trial was considered unnecessary. It is also said, on the other hand, that those who were arrested joined terrorism after they were released from the police custody. Raaflaub and Spaar of Swiss Workers' Assistance Organisation (SAH) visited Punjab in 1991 and described the methods of torture of the terrorists by the police.²⁰

It may be mentioned that the forms of torture described by Raaflaub and Spaar and by the Amnesty International were similar to those used against the Naxalites in Punjab earlier.²¹ In fact, many organisations ranging from those of Human Rights to political parties raised the voices of protest against police excesses. On the other hand, most of the political parties which found themselves pitted against terrorism protested against the inaction of the police and tended to condone its excesses in justification of effective counter-insurgency measures.

K.P.S. Gill had the distinction of having all the qualifications to head the process of suppressing terrorism in Punjab. He is a Jat Sikh. He belongs to a well-to-do family. He had the experience of handling insurgency in Assam. Above all, he was tall and handsome; the qualities that made him attractive for magazines and Television. Throughout the counterinsurgency period he was projected as the "super cop" who was planning and executing various strategies to suppress or "eliminate" terrorists. He was able to marginalise bureaucrats and politicians in public relations exercise. If the period between 1980 and 1984 belonged to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as the most talked about and feared person in Punjab, then KPS Gill, the Director General of Police, was a hero of the period 1991-96. One may, however, be reminded of Clausewitz' famous comment that war was too serious a

matter to be handed over to the generals. It may be stated that counterinsurgency operations and strategy are also too serious and complex a business to be handed over totally to a police officer.

II

Two kinds of findings relating to the villages of our study are taken up in this part. The first is quantitative information regarding the number and social background of the people who were killed by the police in these villages. This includes both those who belonged to these villages and those who belonged to other villages but were killed in the territory of the villages of our study. The second kind of information covers the perceptions and observations of the respondents regarding the police behaviour and actions, killings and other excesses in their villages. Certain cases illustrating these perceptions are also included. Before we proceed to discuss these dimensions, it may be worthwhile to share certain general observations on the basis of the field experience.

Overlooking specificity involved in the case of each village three broad patterns of responses were noticed with regard to the role of the police in dealing with terrorism. The response patterns helped us during the latter part of field work even to anticipate the response in a particular village. To comprehend this dimension it may be appropriate to comment upon the political sociology of Punjab villages.

A stereotypical understanding suggested by anthropological writings underlined the presence of factions competing for power in Punjab's villages. However, a significant dimension is overlooked regarding the village as a political unit. In spite of factional competition, a village is identified as a stronghold of a particular party. Thus we have the Communist, Akali, or Congress dominated villages as per the leanings of a significant majority even though one could find supporters and voters of most of the major political parties in every village. However, when we started the field work it was noticed that a dominant pattern of affiliation of a village with a particular party was an important aspect of the people's perception.

Our respondents in the Communist dominated villages tended to regard the police force as initially indifferent to the threat of the terrorists. Organisationally there were three types of communists in Punjab, *viz.* CPI, CPI (M) and groups of Naxalites. All the communists, irrespective of the party alignments of those covered by the survey, were highly critical of the Sikh militants and the terrorists. Most of them claimed to have confronted the terrorists openly (See Chapter 5). It was alleged that the state targetted the communists as enemies of the system. When the terrorists started attacking the communists, the state, according to the latter, remained inactive, creating apprehensions of convergence of the state interest with the interest of the terrorists. Towards the later phase however the state and the Punjab police discovered that the communists were a suitable ally in fighting terrorism. Thus the communists were provided arms and other help. The police also protected and assisted the newspapers belonging to the Left. Of all the communists the CPI came closest to the police and appeared to justify some of the illegal actions of the police in dealing with terrorism.

There were many villages in our study which have been the strongholds of the Akalis. Prominent among these were Butala, Sathiala, Khojala, and Sur Singh. Some of these villages are located at a very close distance from Mehta - the headquarters of Sant Bhindranwale. In some of the villages there was a strong influence of the Sant as for instance, in Khojala and Sathiala. The people of all the Akali dominated villages were highly critical of the police. Our respondents in such villages were clearly more inclined to narrate incidents of police excesses and cruelty.

It may be pointed out that in no village did the people appreciate the way the police conducted itself. However, we came across people who tended to suggest that there was no soft method of suppressing terrorism; the police had no option other than what they followed. In some cases the members of those families in which relatives had been killed by the terrorists appreciated the harsh measures taken by the police. Such perceptions were situationally conditioned and lacked perspective.

We may now focus our attention on the different dimensions of the police activities.

1. Encounters and Killings

Two of the widely held beliefs among the people were (i) that most illegal activities flourished because of a soft attitude of the police or/and tacit complicity because of monetary consideration and (ii) that whenever the police was determined to deal with crime effectively it invariably used extra-legal methods. In special situations such as that of terrorism the police was normally expected to use extra-legal methods. During the Naxalite movement from 1969 to 1972, we came across numerous reports of "encounter deaths" which were fake.²² A similar pattern was observed in the case of the Khalistan movement. The suspects in most cases were first apprehended and then killed.

Whether the encounters were real as in some of the significant cases, or fake, the police shot dead a large number of people including the terrorists. The data given in Table XXII shows only those killings which occurred within the territory of the villages of our study. It is clear from the data that the police killed 138 people in these villages, of which 60 (43.49 per cent) were identified as terrorists by our respondents. It is important to mention that the number of terrorists who belonged to these villages and were killed by the police was much larger.²³ This meant that some of them were killed somewhere else. Some of the terrorists who figured in the data did not belong to these villages. For example out of seven terrorists who were killed in Rataul village in April 1991 none belonged to that village. Later on, five more terrorists were reportedly brought from outside and killed in the territory of this village.

Did all such killings take place in encounters? There were of course, cases of real as well as fake encounters. According to quantitative information provided by the people counting those killed by the police one by one, 39 were reported killed in "real encounters" as against 45 killed in "fake encounters". The largest number of terrorists killed by the police belonged to Tarn Taran police district. We may first examine the cases of real encounters which were predictably small in number.

Village Rataul had the unique distinction of four vividly remembered real police encounters with the terrorists. As

Table XXII: Police districtwise (A) caste and (B) other features of the persons killed by police/police agents

A						
S. No.	Caste	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Jat Sikh	32	12	10	14	68 (49.28)
2.	Ramgarhia	1	-	-	-	1 (0.72)
3.	Kumhar Sikh	1	-	-	-	1 (0.72)
4.	Nai Sikh	1	-	-	-	1 (0.72)
5.	Mazhbi	1	1	1	2	5 (3.62)
Total		36	13	11	16	76
B						
	Terrorists	7	2	44	7	60 (43.49)
	Nothing known	-	1	-	1	2 (1.45)
Grand Total		43 (31.16)	16 (11.59)	55 (39.86)	24 (17.39)	138 (100)

(Percentages have been computed out of the grand total)

already mentioned (Chapter 3) Rataul was the stronghold of the BTFK led by Gurbachan Singh Manochahal. The terrorists belonging to the BTFK used to take shelter in this village. About 37 families had migrated from the village during the period of terrorism. Among these were ten families of Brahmins most of whom were shopkeepers and landowners. Their houses were located in the centre of the village, one of which was a big two-storey house. These houses vacated by

the Brahmins became the ideal place for hiding. Being located in the centre of the village, any movement of the police could be noticed ahead of the raid. Surprise attack by the police was not easy. Moreover, most other adjoining houses were also vacant and thus the escape routes were many.

It was in April 1991 that the police detected that some terrorists had been taking shelter there. The police came in large numbers and encircled the village. The terrorists were publicly asked to surrender but they refused and firing started. It led to the death of a DIG, Ajit Singh, and eleven other police personnel. Reinforcement followed and finally the army was also called. The encounter continued for 72 hours. Seven terrorists died. One person from the village was also killed in the crossfire. During this period the common people of the village were the worst sufferers. They were evacuated from the village and quartered and cordoned in a place without any facility or provision for food. Many including women and old men were harassed and insulted.

The second encounter took place in October 1991 in which Heera Singh Waryam and his two terrorist comrades of BTFK were killed by the police. In 1992, the police killed four terrorists in an encounter. The fourth encounter involved Gurbachan Singh Manochahal himself. The police got the information that he was hiding in the village Bagrian. When the police raided the village he managed to escape. He was chased by the police and when he reached Rataul, the police could encircle him. The firing started and the Chief of BTFK was killed.

There had been real encounters in some other villages as reported by our respondents. Bikramjit Singh of Butala village died in one such encounter. A popular version was that he was a frequent visitor to a family of smugglers in Butala. On one day 5-6 policemen came to the smuggler. They were also frequent visitors. They had come to collect their regular bribe money. Bikramjit and his comrades decided to flee and while trying to jump the wall one of them fired at a police constable, killing him on the spot. Other constables fired and Bikramjit was killed. It was later termed out as an encounter. The respondents narrated that his body was dragged by the police in the streets of the village. Sital Singh Mattewal alongwith his

comrades died in an encounter in Mattewal. The encounter continued for two days. The police brought into action bullet proof tractors which finally led to those deaths. In village Ghuryala 21 terrorists were killed in three separate encounters. Similarly the people of Khojala village reported another real encounter in which three terrorists were killed. However, in comparison with the number of terrorists claimed to have been killed by the police in the so-called encounters, the cases of actual encounters reported by our respondents were rather small in number. It is likely that they were not sure about some other encounters. However, it was evident that many of the other cases of reported encounter deaths did not seem to be correct. At least so our respondents appeared to believe, because of reported arrest of the particular boys by the police before they were declared as having died in encounter. But there is another dimension of encounters as became evident from the example of Khojala. Four terrorists were hiding in a house in the village. Instead of forcing them to come out of the house, the police according to our respondents set the house on fire. All of them were burnt alive.

Another example of a fake encounter was that of Paramjit Singh who belonged to Udhoke Kalan village. As mentioned elsewhere he became a terrorist in order to save his family from a known organisation of terrorists.²⁴ His father had already been killed. He himself was killed in an "encounter" in 1993. However, an eye witness account of his death was different. He was arrested by the ASI of the local police post on a tip-off that he did not possess any weapon at that time. It was reported that the ASI had joined the police as an SPO. He was an athlete and showed skill and courage in arresting terrorists. So he was quickly promoted to the position of ASI. This ASI ran after Paramjit Singh and caught him. He took him to the police headquarters and the officers gave appropriate orders regarding what needed to be done with Paramjit Singh. An old man whose land was contiguous with that of Paramjit Singh was perhaps the last one to see him alive. It may be noted that this old man also had a son who had joined a terrorist group and was killed by the police. He saw Paramjit Singh sitting in a police jeep. From Paramjit's face and looks it seemed that he had been severely tortured. After stopping

the jeep near the fields, a police officer came out and asked the old man, "Give him some water ... if he wants." And added: "This is his last hour". The old man asked Paramjit Singh whether he wanted water and gave him some to drink. After that the police took him a little distance from that place and shot him dead. Such stories of fake encounters involving a blatant violation of law and of brutality on the part of the police, were many. Another variety of police reported encounter was the case of Bhupinder Singh Bhinda. His killing in Government High School grounds in village Sudhar was, according to the village respondents, planned by Bhinda's cousin (son of his mother's sister : *maasi*) who had also joined the terrorists. Bhinda was surreptitiously shot from behind. His body was taken to Sri Hargobindpur and it was shown as encounter there. It was only through the news appearing in the newspapers the next day that the story of "encounter" was circulated and thus entered in police records.

The dominant modes of reporting an "encounter" may be stated here. The first mode of reporting was the commonest of all. It would state that 'a police party was going in the early (or late) hours of the day. They saw some youngmen on a motorcycle/car under suspicious circumstances. When they were asked to stop, they accelerated the speed and opened fire on the police party. The police fired in return as a result of which one/two of them died. The other one/two managed to escape. Later on, the bodies were identified and the dead were *so and so* dreaded terrorists who carried the rewards of *so many rupees*. There was a great relief that such dangerous terrorists were accidentally eliminated. So and so was responsible for (fifty to hundred) deaths and (five to ten) dacoities'.

The second general mode was limited and was perhaps confined to cases where those terrorists were killed about whose arrest the concerned people were aware. They might have been with the police on a remand from a court. The news of such terrorists' death would appear like the following: 'Such and such terrorist died in police firing when he tried to escape from the police jeep in which he was being carried to/from the court'. The police are not known to be innovative or creative in fabricating the reports. There could be certain

varieties of presentation of the narrative, but the content of the text remained, by and large, the same.

The terrorists were not the only ones to be killed in cold blood by the police. The families of the terrorists and those giving shelter to them also became the victims of the wrath of the police. In addition to the police, the agents and "cats" indulged in killing. The data showed that most of them belonged to the Jat caste. Those identified by our respondents as terrorists belonging to the villages of our study were also identified clearly by caste. The others killed in these villages but not belonging to the specific village could not all of them be so identified. These were simply described by them as "reported terrorists". About 4 of those killed in these villages nobody had any knowledge and our respondents clearly stated they were not convinced whether they certainly were terrorists.

Among the non-terrorists killed by the police the most prominent have been close kith and kin of the terrorists (Table XXIII). The police killed particularly the family members of the prominent terrorists. For example both the father and mother of Gurbachan Singh Manochahal were reportedly killed by the police. Similarly the wife, brother, brother's wife and mother of Resham Singh of Thande village were also killed. In fact, all of them were picked up by the police and nothing was heard of them thereafter. Similarly, Raghubir Singh, father of Harbinder Singh, a terrorist, was also picked up and nothing is known of his whereabouts. Sital Singh Mattewal's wife and two brothers were kidnapped by the police and they have been untraceable so far. In Basarke Bhaini it was a police agent or tout who killed 19 persons most of whom were relatives of a terrorist. It may be noticed here that in these villages a majority of the people killed by the police were not terrorists but related to them. It was also found that some of the persons killed by the police were neither terrorists nor their relatives. In village Sehnsara, Dharam Singh's son was killed on suspicion though he had nothing to do with terrorism. In village Bagrian, Piara Singh and Resham Singh were killed mainly because they used to give shelter to the terrorists. As related earlier, during a real encounter in Rataul an innocent man, Mazhbi by caste, was killed in the crossfire. It may also be mentioned that there

were some villages in our study where the police did not kill anybody. These are Vadala Kalan, Vadala Veerum, Bhikhiwind, Miran Kot, Harsha Chhina, Jheeta Kalan, Guru Ki Wadali and Sultanwind. Of these villages Harsha Chhina presents yet another interesting case. In 1984 when Operation Blue Star happened, four persons of this village were shot dead by the Army for marching towards the Golden Temple, one of whom was Satta Chhina's brother. In 1988 during Operation Black Thunder three boys of this village were killed in the Golden Temple.

Table XXIII: Caste Background and Position of the Persons killed by Police/police touts in real or fake encounters

Sr. No.	Caste	Terrorists		Others Relatives of Terrorists	Total
		Real Encounter	Fake Encounters		
1.	Jat Sikh	21 (53.85)	18 (40.00)	47 (87.04)	86 (62.33)
2.	Ramgarhia	-	1 (2.22)	-	1 (0.72)
3.	Kumhar	-	1 (2.22)	-	1 (0.72)
4.	Nai	-	-	1 (1.85)	1 (0.72)
5.	Mazhbi	-	1 (2.22)	4 (7.41)	5 (3.62)
	Not Known	18 (46.15)	24 (53.34)	2 (2.70)	44 (31.89)
	Total	39 (28.26)	45 (32.61)	54 (39.13)	138 (100)

2. Touts and Cats

A tout is a police spy in a village. His services are sometimes utilised as a doctored false witness in cases of prosecution by the police. This illegal, informal but well established institution was the creation of the colonial rule.

No change has occurred in this practice even after independence.

It is reported on evidence that while leaving India in 1947, the British police officers passed on the lists of 'touts' to the local officers who took over from them. A tout gives information in whatever the police is interested. Historically, different sections of the people who had to interact with the police and the law confronted the touts in various ways. During the Ghadar movement and the Babbar Akali movement, the touts became the targets of attack by the revolutionary terrorists as these touts were a major source of information to the police. The touts were also attacked during the Naxalite movement in Punjab. The same thing happened in the Khalistan movement when they became special targets of the terrorists.

"Cats" were a creation of the Punjab police. A "Cat" was an ex-terrorist who had surrendered to the police. His duty was to help the police in apprehending and killing the terrorists. They were given honorary ranks of police officers and during the terrorist phase they seemed to be carrying a degree of authority. Being former terrorists they were aware of the *modus operandi* of the terrorists. A Maruti Van (generally with dark or tinted glasses) would be parked near a bus stand, a railway station platform or the main bazars of a town. These "Cats" would observe people and tell the police as and when they would see a terrorist. The involvement of the "Cats" in the killings and dacoities has already been pointed out.

As instruments of counter insurgency the "touts" failed to deliver the goods because most of them were locally identified and were easily made targets. On the other hand, the creation of "Cats" was quite successful and it helped in the arrest of a large number of terrorists. In the villages of our study two terrorists in Kashtiwali village became "Cats". Similarly, in village Kaleke, a prominent terrorist Surjit Singh Kaleke turned a 'Cat'. It was believed by a few of the respondents that he was instrumental in the arrest of Dr. Sohan Singh, Chief of a Panthic Committee, from Nepal. The "Cats" began to notoriously dominate the village life directly

or indirectly. Their mercenary orientation was often useful to the police even after the end of terrorism.

3. Police Raids

In some villages where the police thought the support to terrorists was strong, the oppression was more. Young boys suspected of any linkage with the terrorists were picked up and tortured to extract more information about the terrorists. Insulting, abusing and hitting the young and old indiscriminately was according to our respondents an expected or a "normal" feature of police behaviour.

However, it was found that in most cases the police would raid a village only after it had received some information about the hiding terrorists. As the time passed the police raids became more and more numerous in most of the villages. Though most villages in our districts were raided by the police, yet some villages were marked for repeated raids and greater severity. Mattewal, Kaleke, Khojala, Rataul, Sur Singh and Butala in our sample were such villages where police was more active.

Three aspects of the police raids on the villages may be mentioned.

(a) The frequency of the police raids shot up after 1988 and increased further in 1991; the number declined after 1993.

(b) There was also a time dimension of the police raids. Between 1988 and 1990, the police would invariably visit during the day time. During the night the terrorists dominated. Policemen refused to budge from the police station after sunset even after receiving complaints of firing and killings by terrorists in their areas. Later on, the police with the help of para-military forces and army started "Operation Night Dominance". Subsequently the raids began during the nights. The police in very large numbers would invariably conduct a combing operation in the early hours of the day or sometimes late in the evening.

It was reported that the behaviour of the police became more nasty and insulting during the later phase. The families of terrorists and those who gave shelter were made the special targets. An example may be taken for purpose of illustration.

Kaleke is a village which was known during terrorism because a top level terrorist Ravinderjit Singh *alias* Bhola belonged to this village. After the death of Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala, Bhola became Chief of the KLF. One day on a tip-off that he and his associates were in the village, the police assisted by the CRPF quickly cordoned off the village and started the combing operation. The terrorists were not traced, but the entire village had to undergo physical and mental torture by the police. During the search operation all male members were ordered to gather in the village school-ground. In this operation neither minor nor elderly persons were spared. They were forced to sit under the sun in scorching heat in the month of May for the whole day. In a few cases, some people including two teachers of the village High School were ordered to crawl for some distance. Some were commanded to do sit-ups. This happened particularly to those who tried to reason with the police. In some cases people were mercilessly beaten.

Another illustration from the same village related to the wedding ceremony of the cousin of a terrorist from the village. A number of other terrorists carrying sophisticated weapons came to participate in the celebrations held in the Gurdwara. Some adolescent young boys from that village and a few surrounding villages were fascinated with weapons which they borrowed and joined in the dance with AK47s in their hands. They were perhaps also excited about the video being made of the ceremony and thus fondly posed before the camera. Next morning a police party raided the village and procured the video cassette. Some of those adolescents were arrested while others ran away from their home in fear. It was not known how many of them were forced to join the terrorists. Most others were released only after sureties given by elders over and above the bribes given to the police.

The case of Kaleke has no qualitative distinction from what happened in Khojala and Rataul. In other villages, the police did not harass all the people. However, it was reported that whosoever encountered the police by raising some questions, was given various kinds of treatment, from abuses, kicks and beating to detention. Actually even during the so-called normal times a common man does not expect the police

to treat him as a citizen having some civil rights. The period we are mentioning was perhaps difficult for everyone. The behaviour of the police became more "atrocious".

We have already mentioned that under the provision of the TADA the police could arrest a person even on grounds of suspicion. This enabled the police to arrest indiscriminately though invariably they kept in mind the position of the families. In such cases in all our villages all the people interviewed stated that no one was released without payment of a bribe. The amount varied from Rs. 5000 to 50,000 depending upon the extent of involvement of the person or his promiximity to the terrorist. It may be mentioned, however, that according to our respondents, any one who had been identified as a terrorist was not spared. Bribe, in such cases did not help. Commenting upon the extent of bribery during terrorism a person in Sathiala village said, "The only real beneficiary of terrorism is the police. They made money from all kinds of people. They actually grabbed even that money which was looted and extorted by the terrorists".

4. Surrenders

Besides the arrests made by the police we also had cases of the terrorists who surrendered to the police. The police used surrender as a tactical weapon. When the tide turned against the terrorists, some of them began to contact the police through influential persons for a safer way out of terrorist crime or/and seemingly sure death. Relatives in the police were expected to be more helpful. Surrender, in fact, became a ceremonial occasion. At public functions a particular number of terrorists would hand over their weapons to a public figure including ministers and the DGP himself. In retrospect it seems that managing surrenders in public functions, skillfully projected by the audiovisual media, had a tremendous psychological impact on all concerned. There are reasons to believe that the number of terrorists was far less than the numbers shown in theatrical ceremonies. We came across this fact right at the beginning of our field work. During a visit to village Sathiala we thought of collecting information regarding the terrorists from the local police post. The Head Constable treated us graciously and gave all the information

we wanted. Later on we found that what he verbally told was quite correct, but what was entered in the records of the police was not only at odds with it but was also incorrect. Some of the persons who were listed in the police records had never joined terrorism. When the matter was further investigated it was found that when in a public ceremony the surrenders were to be stage managed, some young Sikh boys were picked up and they were handed AK-47 rifles that were later to be presented to the DGP. One such person had a cycle repair shop in one of our villages. However most of those who surrendered in the villages of our study were found to be actually members or associates of one or the other outfit. In Sultanwind we met and interviewed a young boy who was in KCF(P) and had surrendered to the police. He was now engaged in farming. His version was that those surrendered terrorists who did not become police "cats" were brutally tortured during interrogation. He narrated cases of those who confessed killing of people and were later on killed in false encounters by the police.

Finally, it may be added that when the respondents were asked to compare the behaviour of Punjab police with CRPF and BSF personnel on the basis of the village experience, their response was predictable: the police was the worst, lawless, cruel and corrupt. In spite of that, however, they tended to understand the role of the police in the "context of the conduct of terrorists". Invariably we would come across a comment such as: "There was no other way to control the terrorists". Some of the terrorists who indulged in rapes earned people's hatred. We were told that when such a terrorist was killed by the police the people generally welcomed it.

Notes

¹Cited in Rushworth M. Kidder, "Finding a Response to Terrorism", *Violence and Terrorism*, Annual Editions, 1990/91, Dushkin Publishing Group, Connecticut, 1990, p. 172.

²Some of the significant writings were:

N.C. Leites and Charles Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, Makham Publishing Co., Chicago, 1970; Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1966. (Though the authors deal with the ways of tackling communist insurgency, their ideas at the theoretical level are relevant

to all kinds of insurgency or terrorism). William Regis Farrell, *The US Government Response to Terrorism: In Search of an Effective Strategy*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1982; Grant Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics and Counter-Measures*, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

³Government of India, *White Paper on the Punjab*, Delhi 1984, p. 3.

⁴V.N. Narayanan, *Tryst with Terror: Punjab's Turbulent Decade*, Ajanta, 1996, p. 36.

⁵Harish K. Puri, "Perils of Prosperity" Syndrome: Rethinking Relations Between Ethnicity, Development and Democracy", *Ethnic Studies Report*, XII: 1 (January 1994), pp. 89-99.

⁶Cited in Narayanan, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁷Cited from Amnesty International, *India: Human Rights Violations in Punjab: Use and Abuse of the Law*, 10 May 1991, p. 52, n. 19.

⁸Interview ENS, *Indian Express*, 2 March 1995.

⁹Joyce Pettigrew, *Unheard Voices*, pp. 47, 153-55.

¹⁰*Sant Sipahi*, July 1988, p. 13.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 28; *The Hindustan Times*, December 12, 1988; *The Tribune*, July 31, 1989.

¹²*The Week* 5 June, 1994.

¹³K.S. Dhillon, "Servility and Oppression: Twin Legacies of the Police in India"; paper presented at a Seminar organised by Institute of Punjab Studies, Chandigarh, 26-28 February, 1996.

¹⁵Amnesty International, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45. (See copy of the official order dated 30 August 1989, in Appendix A).

¹⁶Narayanan, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁸Amnesty International, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-33.

¹⁹*Frontline*, 17 December 1993 and 29 July 1994.

²⁰Their legs are pulled apart to 180 degrees so as to cause intense pain as well as damage to the muscles.

A heavy metal or wooden round rod is rolled over the thighs and ankles of the prisoner; often the police men sit or stand on the rolling stick in order to make it unbearably heavy.

Electric shocks given to the genitals, to the head, ears and legs.

Prolonged severe beatings with leather whips or metal rods.

The victim's hands are tied behind his back and he is suspended by his arms on a wall or from the ceiling.

Threat of rape or other sexual abuse of the victim.

Hansrvell Raaflaub and Hans Peter Spaar "Rights and Wrongs in Punjab: A Swiss Agency Report" *The Sikh Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1, January 1993. See also All India Federation of Organisations for Democratic Rights, *Punjab: People Fight Back: A Report to the Nation*, 1987.

²¹See Paramjit S. Judge, *Insurrection to Agitation: The Naxalite Movement in Punjab*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1992. It may be mentioned that there are specific terms for different tortures. For example *Gider Kut*, *Ghotna Lagauna*, *Putha Latkauna* etc.

²²Judge, *Ibid.*

²³Please see Chapter 2 for the exact number of terrorists who belonged to the villages studied and had been subsequently killed by the police in real or fake encounters.

²⁴Please see Chapter 3.

Involuntary Migrations

Violence is one of the major factors in forcing a particular set of people to abandon their age old habitat and seek shelter at secure places. Terrorism as a discriminatory use of collective violence is one of the significant factors for the displacement of people in modern times. In Punjab it caused a large scale migration of the people from villages to the cities, from small towns to the big cities within the state and to places outside the state. Such involuntary migrations are qualitatively different from other kinds of movements of the people in the sense that these affect people who share common traits as belonging to groups different from those of the terrorists. All these migrants were either actual or potential targets of terrorist violence. A high intensity of violence or threats of violence, kidnappings, rapes and extortions by various terrorist organizations and the failure of the state to protect their lives and property were some of the major reasons for their migration. Many of the migrants belonged to families which lost their dear ones before they decided to leave their villages.

Punjab had gone through a trauma in 1947 when the partition of India resulted in communal riots and mass scale migration of Hindus and Sikhs from West Punjab to East Punjab and of Muslims from East Punjab to West Punjab in Pakistan. An estimated two lakhs died in riots. About ten million were reported to have been displaced from their native places. A second phase of migration in the Indian Punjab started in the 1980s due to terrorism which continued upto the end of 1992. The anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and other places in November 1984 following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi unleashed another wave—the

migration of the Sikh families to Punjab. In this process people had to leave their houses, shops, farms, traditional occupations and were forced to resettle in new places. Violence and threat to life and property were the push factors in all these cases.

In this chapter we discuss the migration resulting from terrorist violence in Punjab, with a view to socially locate the migrants and to examine the reasons for their becoming the targets.

The genesis of the process of migration in Punjab may be traced to the violent clash between Bhindranwale's followers and the Sant Nirankaris in April, 1978. But its impact was marginal until the murders of the then Nirankari chief Baba Gurbachan Singh, Lala Jagat Narain and Romesh Chandra led to the reign of terror in the state. The people and the parties who condemned and challenged Bhindranwale came under his direct threat. His slogan that one Sikh was capable of dealing with 35 Hindus created a sense of insecurity not only among the Hindus but also others who opposed his brand of Sikh politics. In this situation Hindus, Communists, moderate Sikhs, and police personnel became special targets of the killing squads. The people in the rural areas belonging to these categories started moving to the nearby towns or cities which were considered safer than the villages. But the process was accelerated mainly after the cataclysmic happenings during 1984—the Operation Blue Star and anti Sikh riots outside Punjab—and the Panthic Committee's declaration of Khalistan in 1986. In the stipulated Khalistan, Hindus were supposed to flee from Punjab. The Sikhs from outside Punjab were asked to migrate to Punjab on the pattern of what happened in 1947.

The hopes aroused by the Rajiv-Longowal Accord and the Assembly Elections in 1985 were soon shattered by the upswing of dramatic terrorist actions on the one hand and by the increasing lack of faith in the capacity of the government and its police apparatus to provide a sense of security to the people, on the other. A virtual anarchy prevailed after 1986. As scared policemen refused to stir out during the night and more and more robber youngmen took to terrorism,

indiscriminate killings, kidnappings and robbery, the targets were no more the Hindus alone. Now the well-to-do families of the Jat Sikhs also became the victims and started moving to the urban areas or to places outside the state for their safety until normalcy was restored after 1992.

An attempt is made here to explain the migration process in the 28 villages in the four police districts of our study on the basis of the data collected from these villages. This chapter has been divided into two parts. The first part deals with the quantitative data and the second with selected case studies.

The distinct features of migration may be discussed under the following sections:

I

1. Extent of Migration
2. Caste and religious context of migrations
3. Occupational background
4. Pattern of landholdings of the migrants
5. Place of Destination
6. Return to the Native villages
7. Sale of property by migrants

The 1981 and 1991 Census data show that the population growth rate in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts during the decade was 14.31% and 16.68% respectively; considerably lower than the overall growth rate for Punjab state 20.26%. The available data (See Table XXIV) points further to the fact that a majority of the villages had lower growth rates than the average growth rate in the districts. Some of these had a negative growth. It suggested a possible impact of the intensity of violence and insecurity at the village level during the period. Our field study tended to confirm that logic. Most of the villages had low and middle level business establishments which were generally owned by the Hindu traders who became the first target of terrorist violence. They and many other well-to-do people migrated from their villages to safer places, nearby or distant.

Table XXIV: Population Growth Rates of Punjab, Amritsar and Gurdaspur Districts and the studied Villages (according to census reports)

Punjab	Total 1981	Population 1991	Absolute Increase	Decadal Growth rates (Per cent)
Punjab	16788915	20190795	3401880	20.26
Amritsar District	2188490	2501731	313241	14.31
Amritsar Police District				
Basarke	1971	2324	353	17.91
Harsha Chhina	5011	5229	228	4.55
Jheeta Kalan	3663	4076	413	11.28
Mirankot	2962	3339	377	12.73
Thande	1443	1751	306	21.18
Sultanwind				Urban Area
Wadali Guru				Urban Area
Majitha Police District				
Butala*	2101	2242	140	6.66
Rajpura*	1868	1909	41	2.20
Narangpur*	1007	875	-132	-13.11
Kammoke*	1020	1301	281	27.55
Kaleke	2037	2263	226	11.10
Mattewal	2457	2276	-181	-7.37
Sathiala	7020	7243	253	3.60
Sehnsra	3676	4003	327	8.90
Vadala Kalan	3618	4197	579	16.00
Vadala Veerum	3146	3869	723	22.98
Tarn Taran Police District				
Bagrian	2146	2480	334	15.56
Bhikhiwind	7986			sub- urban
Gharyala	6657	6447	-210	-3.16
Mianwind	1829	1988	159	8.69
Naushehra Pannuan	5354	5961	607	11.34

Punjab	Total 1981	Population 1991	Absolute Increase	Decadal Growth rates (Per cent)
Rataul	2451	2791	340	13.87
Sur Singh	8542	8491	-51	-0.60
Gurdaspur District	1513435	1761834	252399	16.68
Batala Police District				
Butter Kalan	1558	1393	-165	-10.59
Cheema Khudi	2858	2539	-319	-11.16
Dayalgarh	1398	2093	695	49.71
Ghasitpur	1069	1193	124	11.60
Kashitiwal	1113	1261	148	13.30
Khojala	2711	2309	-402	-14.83
Uchoke**	2386	2544	158	6.62

* All these four villages have been treated as one village viz Butala.

** Actually, the village falls under Majitha Police district but owing to its closeness with the Batala Police district, has been included in it.

The data collected from the 28 villages, under study (Table XXV) show that a total of 3182 persons belonging to 494 families about which we got specific information migrated from their native places due to terrorist violence. (Another 700 families from just one urbanised part of a village, adjacent to the rural part of the village Bhikhiwind which was included in our study had migrated to Amritsar). The scale of migration was the highest in Majitha police district followed by Tarn Taran. The lowest level of migration was in Amritsar police district. Two of the seven villages under study (Sultanwind and Guru Ki Wadali) in this district have become part of Amritsar city. The rest of the villages, viz. Jheeta Kalan, Mirankot, Thande and Basarke Bhaini are at the periphery of the area under the Municipal Corporation falling within 1-2 kms from its boundary. Only one village Harsha Chhina is located at 5 kms from the territorial boundary of the Municipal Corporation. As one of the big cities of Punjab and a place of Sikh pilgrimage the city was under a special protection of the security forces. Majitha police district constituted of two sub-

divisions i.e. Ajnala and Baba Bakala of Amritsar revenue district is on the other hand largely rural. Its area is widely spread, about 80 kms from East to West and about 20 km from North to South. A large number of historical Sikh shrines and *deras* including the headquarters of Bhindranwale's Dam Dami Taksal at Mehta fall in its territory. Only a few villages and small towns in this area are situated on national and state highways where there was greater patrolling by the security forces particularly during the day time. A large number of Jat Sikh families had settled in their farmhouses (outside the villages) which were not connected with any metalled road. Given its proximity to the border and other special features this area proved to be a haven for the terrorists. Police and para-military forces did not move after sunset in most of the areas in this police district. All this resulted in increased terrorist violence or counter violence affecting the day-to-day life of the people and leading to a large scale migration. Tarn Taran police district, next to Majitha in terms of migration, was the home of a number of top level terrorists and witnessed a high intensity of terrorist activities.

Table XXV: Number of migrant families and persons
(Police districtwise)

Sr.No.	Police District	Families	Persons
1.	Amritsar	60 (12.15%)	436 (13.70%)
2.	Majitha	196 (39.68%)	1195 (37.55%)
3.	Tarn Taran	162 (32.79%)	1053 (33.09%)
4.	Batala	76 (15.38%)	498 (15.66%)
Total		494 (100%)	3182 (100%)
Average size of the family		6.44	
		Amritsar	7.26
		Majitha	6.09
		Tarn Taran	6.50
		Batala	6.55

2. Caste and Religious Context of Migrations

An important dimension of the migrations was the social structural placement of the migrants. Caste status of the migrants provides us a clue to their status and influence in the village. Religious background, however, is a corollary to the proclaimed religious character of the movement. Being a movement for Khalistan one of the targets of attack was taken to be the people belonging to the Hindu community. Forcing the migration of the Hindus was considered to be part of the rationale of the movement. But the data on caste and religion of the migrants indicates an unexpected pattern.

The information regarding caste and religion of the migrants is classified in Table XXVI. It shows that 59 per cent of the total migrants in the area of our study belonged to the Hindu community. Among the Hindu migrants those of Brahmin caste were the largest in number. It is clear that a considerable proportion of migrants were Sikhs. But why did the Sikhs migrate? Who were the Sikh migrants? Our data show that Jats constituted a major chunk of migrants, i.e. 24 per cent of the total. The Sikh Jats are the dominant caste and they constitute about two-thirds of the Sikh population. Proportionately a larger number of migrants from the Sikh community, of course, belonged to the lower castes. It was evident that terrorism was largely indiscriminate in its impact and all sections of society felt threatened by it.

3. Occupation

Leaving one's native settlement is not only an emotional and social dislocation but also an economic setback. Going to a new place implies starting a new life. As against the pull factor of new economic opportunities, the well known reason for immigration of Punjabis to foreign lands and other places within India, the logic of the exclusively push factor of migration works differently. Yet the economic condition and resources have a connection with the crucial decision regarding the migration of families to an uncertain and less hospitable new environment. It was considered important to look into the economic condition of the migrants on the basis of their occupations and landholdings in their villages.

Table XXVI: Caste and Religion of migrant families (Police districtwise)

Sr. No.	Caste	Amritsar		Majitha		Tarn Taran		Batala		Total		Grand Total	
		H	S	H	S	H	S	H	S	Ch	S		
1.	Brahmin	33 (15.87)	-	93 (44.71)	-	67 (32.21)	-	15 (7.21)	-	208 (100)	-	208 (42.12)	(100)
2.	Khatri/Arora	9	1 (1.54)	22 (28.21)	8 (10.26)	34 (43.59)	4 (5.13)	-	-	65 (83.33)	13 (16.67)	78 (15.80)	(100)
3.	Bania	-	-	5 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	5 (100)	-	5 (1.01)	(100)
4.	Jat	-	9 (7.63)	-	37 (31.36)	-	32 (27.12)	-	40 (33.89)	-	118 (100)	118 (23.90)	(100)
5.	Ramgarhia	-	-	-	-	-	6 (75.00)	-	2 (25.00)	-	8 (100)	8 (1.62)	(100)
6.	Kamboj	-	-	-	1 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (0.20)	(100)
7.	Suniara	-	1 (7.14)	7 (50.00)	1 (7.14)	1 (7.14)	4 (28.58)	-	-	8 (57.14)	6 (42.86)	14 (2.83)	(100)
8.	Chhimba	-	-	-	11 (55.00)	-	6 (30.00)	-	3 (15.00)	-	20 (100)	20 (4.05)	(100)
9.	Kumhar	-	1 (33.33)	-	1 (33.33)	-	1 (33.34)	-	-	-	3 (100)	3 (0.60)	(100)
10.	Thathiar	-	-	-	-	-	1 (100)	-	-	-	1 (100)	1 (0.20)	(100)
11.	Nai	-	-	-	3 (75.00)	-	1 (25.00)	-	-	-	4 (100)	4 (0.81)	(100)
12.	Jheer	-	-	-	1 (50.00)	-	1 (50.00)	-	-	-	2 (100)	2 (0.40)	(100)

Sr. No.	Caste	Amritsar		Majitha		Tarn Taran		Batala		Total		Grand Total
		H	S	H	S	H	S	H	Ch	S	Ch	
13.	Julaha	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1
						(100)		(100)		(100)		(0.20) (100)
14.	Vairagi	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6
		(100)						(100)		(100)		(1.21) (100)
15.	Chamar	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3
				(33.33)						(33.34) (66.67)		(0.60) (100)
16.	Sansi	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
					(50.00)					(50.00)		(0.81) (100)
17.	Mazhbi/Masih	-	-	-	3	-	3	-	1	11	1	18
					(16.67)		(16.67)		(5.55)	(61.11)	(5.56)	(3.64) (100)
18.	Total	48	12	128	68	103	59	16	1	59	295	494
		(9.72)	(2.43)	(25.91)	(13.77)	(20.85)	(11.94)	(3.24)	(0.20)	(11.94)	(59.72)	(40.08) (100)

The long list of different occupations of the migrants (Table XXVII) is suggestive both of their differential economic status and of the threat perception among the villagers of the different strata. It may be noticed, however, that about 80 per cent of the migrants belonged to the families involved in six major occupations, namely shopkeeping (37.66%), farming, and/or dairy farming (16.41%), government service (14.18%), police or para military service (6.68%) and school teaching (4.86%). Looking at these occupations may help us to make sense of what sort of villagers were not only more vulnerable targets of terrorism but were also more capable of a flight from the villages. Though most of the village population was engaged in the cultivation of lands, the number of the farming families which decided to or were able to migrate to cities was small. A family which was engaged in dairy farming in addition to agriculture, not only had an available access to but also enjoyed a level of familiarity with the urban life. This factor, as our respondents articulated, facilitated their decision to migrate to cities or nearby towns as these were considered relatively safer than the villages.

Table XXVII: Occupation of the Head of the Migrant Family

Sr. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1.	Factory Owner	3	0.61
2.	Transport	3	0.61
3.	Commission Agent/Businessman	16	3.24
4.	College Teacher	1	0.20
5.	Farming/Dairy Farming	81	16.41
6.	Shopkeeper	186	37.66
7.	Emigrant/Foreign returned	4	0.81
8.	School Teacher/Farming	1	0.20
9.	RMP Doctor/Vaid	11	2.23
10.	Flourmill/Sawmill	10	2.02
11.	Police/BSF/CRPF Service	33	6.68
12.	Govt. Service (low level)	70	14.18
13.	Grain Trader	2	0.40

Sr. No.	Occupation	Number	Percentage
14.	School Teacher	24	4.86
15.	Goldsmith	2	0.40
16.	Halvai	3	0.61
17.	Tailor	6	1.22
18.	Electrician/Mason	5	1.01
19.	Astrologer	3	0.61
20.	Milkman	1	0.20
21.	Ex-Serviceman	5	1.01
22.	Deed Writer	2	0.40
23.	Watch maker	1	0.20
24.	Cycle Repair	2	0.40
25.	Weaver	2	0.40
26.	Cobbler	1	0.20
27.	Vender	2	0.40
28.	Casual Labour	14	2.83
Grand Total		494	100

As we noticed, the largest number of migrant families were engaged in shopkeeping. The heads of all these families were low to middle level shopkeepers, selling items of daily needs like grocery. It is noteworthy that, with few exceptions, this occupation was under the control of the people of various Hindu castes. Their concentration was higher in the big villages having greater trading/business activity. Given the ideological distancing from the shopkeeping Hindus, it was believed to be easier for the terrorists to single them out as targets. It was also found that after their migration, the enterprising people of the other community found it opportune to enter into this occupation.

Four villages of our study are worth mentioning with regard to the above mentioned phenomenon. These are Butala, Gharyala, Mattewal and Naushehra Pannuan. Geographically these villages occupied a central place in a cluster of six to ten villages each. By the late 60s, in the wake of the Green Revolution, these villages emerged as centres of middle level trade and business. Commission agents and shopkeepers

flourished to cater to the new needs of the farmers in the surrounding villages. It seemed that the emerging class of enterprising farmers (mainly Jat Sikh) in these villages envied the rising economic power of the traders (mainly Hindu). The terrorist boys from these villages mainly belonged to the Jat caste. Our field experience threw up suggestive evidence of their encouragement for terrorizing these shopkeepers and traders to flee. There were, to the contrary, significant instances of individuals and families of one community standing up to protect families of traders and persuading them not to migrate. But the evidence pointed to the play of variant impulses and interests. However, a large number of Hindu businessmen from these four villages migrated to the cities and towns. At the time of our study, most of the trade and business in these villages were in the hands of Jat Sikhs.

The third largest number of migrant families belonged to low level (Class III and IV) government employees. A total of 70 migrant families belonged to this category. The heads of these families were employed in electricity and health departments, municipal corporation, agriculture department, telecommunication departments, etc. Their work place was in the urban/sub-urban areas which enabled them to have a direct access to these areas. Secondly, they did not seem to have much stake in the village politics or economic system. The cost of migration of families in their case was outbalanced by the urgency of avoiding risk involved in daily commuting and the threat to life in the village. In the case of families of police personnel, the threat to security appeared to be a more powerful push factor, irrespective of the cost of the migration. However, the construction of housing accommodation by the police department for their personnel at district headquarters may have, as indicated in our study, facilitated the decision to migrate in a few cases.

4. Pattern of Landholdings

The castewise size of landholdings of migrant families (Table XXVIII) shows as expected, the preponderance of Jat Sikhs as the main category of landowner cultivators. The other castes such as Ramgarhias, Chhimba and Suniaria were expected to be landless artisans. The differentiation in terms

of the size of landholdings among these castes gets reflected in the migration pattern. Marginal and small farmers being less able to migrate were less in proportion to their numbers in the rural population. Conversely, the proportion of the migrants from among the small number of middle class farmers with holdings of 10 acres and above was large. The upper castes, namely Brahmins and Khatri owned land in some cases but they did not generally cultivate the land directly. As many as 75 families of Brahmin, Khatri and Arora caste groups among the migrants were owners of land; a larger proportion of them were in the category of small and marginal landowning strata. It may be possible to speculate that whereas the threat posed by terrorism seemed to have been more or less evenly spread over different categories, the differentiation in their capacity to pay the cost of migration was a crucial determinant of which families could take the plunge to escape the threat.

Table XXVIII: Castewise size of landholdings of the migrant families who owned land (in acres)

Sr. No.	Caste	Below 2.5	2.5-5	5-10	10-25	Above 25	Total
1.	Brahmin	16	13	9	12	3	53 (26.24)
2.	Arora/Khatri	12	4	4	1	1	22 (10.89)
3.	Jat	9	27	27	37	16	116 (57.43)
4.	Ramgarhia	-	1	1	-	-	2 (1.00)
5.	Kamboj	-	-	1	-	-	1 (0.49)
6.	Chhimba	2	2	2	-	-	6 (2.97)
7.	Suniara	-	1	-	-	-	1 (0.49)
8.	Nai	1	-	-	-	-	1 (0.49)
Total		40 (19.80)	48 (23.76)	44 (21.78)	50 (24.76)	20 (9.90)	202 (100)

Percentage of landholders out of total migrants = 40.89.

5. Place of Destination

Our respondents appeared to have intimate knowledge of where a particular family went to settle, except in the case of 18 of those families which had moved out of Punjab. A total of 310 (about 63 per cent) of these families were identified as having settled in nearby towns and cities within the area of these four police districts; 60 in other neighbouring areas in the state and 124 (about 25%) as having migrated to areas outside Punjab. (For details see Tables XXIX-XXXI). Out of the 13 specific destinations in the first category 10 fall in Amritsar revenue district and three in Gurdaspur revenue district. The largest number of 188 families migrated to Amritsar city, 26 to Batala town and 22 to Pathankot in district Gurdaspur. Delhi and different towns in Haryana attracted a number of those families which migrated out of Punjab. It was evident that for 75 per cent of the migrants the choice of a new place for settlement was within the state, largely the places close by and familiar. Perhaps because they did not have to face the problems which arise from cultural conflict. That is how our respondents appeared to rationalise the high incidence of migration to nearby towns.

6. Return to Native Villages

It was speculated that most of the involuntary migrants might have returned to their native places following the return of peace. However, this was not the case. According to the information available upto the middle of 1997, only 12 per cent of the total migrants in our area returned to their villages. These (Table XXXII) were mainly Jats and Brahmins. Most of the migrants did not return to their villages. Was it because of some breach of trust and bonds with their old fellows or because of better economic opportunities and attractions of the life in the city or town? Perhaps both, so thought our respondents. But the second appeared to them to be a weightier reason. Many of the migrants had sold their property and business in the village and the others were able to enjoy better living conditions and to look after their property without actually living in the village. Yet as we found in our discussions, different sets of people were affected in distinct ways. Those who had returned did not evidently express any grievance against their own village people. In most of

the villages it was reported to us that the people continued to visit their fellows who had migrated to the cities due to terror.

Table XXIX: Place of destination of the migrant families within these Police districts

Sr. No.	Place of Destination	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Ajnala	1	2	-	-	3 (0.97)
2.	Amritsar	38	98	42	10	188 (60.65)
3.	Batala	-	1	-	25	26 (8.39)
4.	Beas	-	2	3	-	5 (1.61)
5.	Dera Baba Nanak	-	-	-	1	1 (0.32)
6.	Dera Beas	-	5	-	-	5 (1.61)
7.	Jandiala	1	5	-	-	6 (1.94)
8.	Mehta	-	-	-	1	1 (0.32)
9.	Patti	-	-	19	-	19 (6.13)
10.	Qadian	-	-	-	16	16 (5.16)
11.	Raja Sansi	-	1	-	-	1 (0.32)
12.	Rayya	-	16	3	-	19 (6.13)
13.	Tarn Taran	-	-	20	-	20 (6.45)
Total		40	130	87	53	310* (12.90) (41.94) (28.06) (17.10) (100)

* Out of 494 families = 61.57%

Table XXX: Place of destination in Punjab out of these police districts

Sr. No.	Place Destination	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Bathinda	-	-	1	-	1 (1.67)
2.	Dina Nagar	-	-	-	1	1 (1.67)
3.	Hoshiarpur	-	2	-	1	3 (5.00)
4.	Jalandhar	-	8	5	-	13 (21.67)
5.	Kapurthala	-	2	-	-	2 (3.33)
6.	Kesgarh Sahib	-	-	-	1	1 (1.67)
7.	Ludhiana	2	1	4	2	9 (15.00)
8.	Malerkotla	-	-	1	-	1 (1.67)
9.	Mansa	-	-	1	-	1 (1.67)
10.	Mukerian	-	3	-	-	3 (5.00)
11.	Pathankot	-	14	-	8	22 (36.65)
12.	Patiala	-	-	-	2	2 (3.33)
13.	Phagwara	-	-	1	-	1 (1.67)
Total		2 (3.33)	30 (50.00)	13 (21.67)	15 (25.00)	60* (100)

* Out of 494 families = 12.15%.

Table XXXI: Place of destination out of Punjab according to police districts

Sr. No.	Place of Destination	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Chandigarh	-	1	2	-	3 (2.42)
2.	Haryana	4	21	28	1	54 (43.55)
3.	Delhi	10	4	17	-	31 (25.00)
4.	Uttar Pradesh	3	2	2	-	7 (5.45)
5.	Madhya Pradesh	1	3	3	-	7 (5.45)
6.	Rajasthan	-	-	2	-	2 (1.61)
7.	United Kingdom/ USA	-	2	-	-	2 (1.61)
8.	No information	-	3	8	7	18 (14.52)
Total		18 (14.52)	36 (29.03)	62 (50.00)	8 (6.45)	124* (100)

* Out of 494 = 26.10%

But what about those migrants who settled outside Punjab? None was able to say that those who had not returned were feeling better off in their new places. The experiences could be diverse. It may be worthwhile to refer to a case here.

From Mianwind, a village in the Tarn Taran police district, most of the Brahmins migrated to Rayya, Amritsar and places out of Punjab. As told by the head of a family, some of these families of Brahmins were rich. They were commission agents, traders or shopkeepers. Besides shopkeeping one of our respondents was also involved in grain trade. When a

Table XXXII: Police district wise Caste of the families who have returned

Sr. No.	Caste	Amritsar	Majitha	Tarn Taran	Batala	Total
1.	Brahmin	3	8	9	5	25 (40.98)
2.	Khatri/Arora	1	1	5	-	7 (11.48)
3.	Jat	5	1	6	6	18 (29.51)
4.	Ramgarhia	-	-	-	1	1 (1.64)
5.	Suniara	-	-	1	-	1 (1.64)
6.	Kumhar	-	-	1	-	1 (1.64)
7.	Varaigi	3	-	-	-	3 (4.92)
8.	Mazhbi	-	-	-	5	5 (8.19)
Total		12 (19.67)	10 (16.39)	22 (36.07)	17 (27.87)	61* (100)

* Out of 494 = 12.35%

Brahmin was killed in this village by a prominent terrorist Billa of Varpal, terror naturally spread among other Brahmins. He along with his family migrated to Yamuna Nagar in Haryana. However, he had a "terrible experience". Haryana was already experiencing a conflict between the Punjabis (largely refugees from Pakistan) and the Haryanvi sons of the soil. The escalation of violence in Punjab resulted into another set of migrations to the neighbouring state where a sense of hostility towards Punjabis was already present. Our respondent narrated incidents of harassment he and his family faced. They lost the savings in the newly started business and finally returned to Rayya and opened a small shop. Similarly, Vikas Kumar of Naushehra Pannuan could

not settle in Haryana, and returned to his native village. Given this context the property transactions in the villages acquire significance.

7. Transactions of Property

As we noticed in various villages, the migration was in most cases a sudden response to an incident of violence in the village. The people migrated leaving their property—houses and/or land and shops—without getting the opportunity to sell the same. In many villages the terrorists had warned the other villagers against buying the property of the Hindus. Many Hindu landowners informally handed over their property to their Sikh friends to look after. We could not know in how many cases the friends did not act honestly. The people interviewed by us were reluctant to disclose unhappy details regarding the property transactions.

Table XXXIII: Caste and Religion of the Seller and Buyer of Agriculture Land

Sr. No.	Buyer	Seller				Total
		Jat Sikh	Kamboj Sikh	Mazhbi Sikh	Brahmin Hindu	
1.	Brahmin Hindu	15	2	-	2	19
2.	Khatri Hindu	4	-	-	-	4
3.	Jat Sikh	5	-	1	-	6
4.	Khatri Sikh	3	-	-	-	3
5.	Suniara Sikh	1	-	-	-	1
Total		28	2	1	2	33

The data presented in Tables XXXIII, XXXIV and XXXV indicate the following: (a) 33 migrants of which 19 were Brahmans sold land, (b) 49 migrants out of which 40 were Brahmans sold their shops, and 45 migrants out of which 31 were Brahmans sold their houses. Strictly speaking, it were those 45 of the last category who, it was thought, may never return. What is interesting in the data is that the percentage of

Table XXXIV: Caste/Religion of the Seller and Buyer Shops

Buyer	Seller										Total
	Jat Sikh	Ramgarhia Sikh	Kamboj Sikh	Chhimba Sikh	Nai Sikh	Numhar Sikh	Saini Sikh	Khatri Hindu	Total		
1. Brahmin Hindu	32	1	2	-	1	1	2	1	2	1	40
2. Khatri Hindu	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
3. Bania Hindu	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
4. Thatiara Hindu	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
5. Jat Sikh	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	40	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	49

Table XXXV: Caste/Religion of the Sellers and Buyers of Houses

Buyer	Seller							Total
	Jat Sikh	Ramgarhia Sikh	Kamboj Sikh	Kumhar Sikh	Saini Sikh	Mazbi Sikh	Khatri Hindu	
1. Brahmin Hindu	19	1	2	1	1	6	1	31
2. Khatri Hindu	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
3. Bania Hindu	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
4. Jat Sikh	4	-	-	-	1	1	-	6
Total	30	1	2	1	2	7	2	45

those who have not sold their property is significantly higher than those who have not returned. This implies that they have, perhaps, kept their options open.

It was evident that the migrations caused by terrorism had further contributed to the disruption of the existing economic and social relations in the villages of Punjab. Firstly, the villages in the study area have tended to become religiously homogeneous. Secondly, a class of business entrepreneurs belonging to the class of peasant proprietors have noticeably replaced the traditional traders. This has tended to blur the earlier dichotomy in which Sikhs were mainly peasants and Hindus were the money-lending shopkeepers.

II

The data in Part I indicate only the magnitude of migrations during terrorism. The reader gets the impression that the terrorists through mere power of violence effected these migrations or that it was precipitated by the added factor of police harassment of the people. This is only one side of the picture. Another dimension was that certain potential migrants did not leave the villages. Further, the scenario which emerged during our field visits was a mosaic of complex patterns and exhibited the role of social forces in this process. It may be appropriate to go into a few of the specific cases collected during our field visits. These have been divided into three sections each of which broadly represents cases of one type.

1. In one of the villages in our study, i.e., Sehnsra which falls in Majitha police district, a large number of families had to migrate due to terrorist violence. About 85 families belonging to almost all caste/occupational categories were involved in this process. Many of these were well-to-do Jat Sikh families having members who participated in business operations and were employed in government jobs in addition to their traditional occupation of farming. This village had high literacy and even some members of the lower castes including the scheduled castes were middle rank officials in police and civil administration. Thus the migration of practically all the educated and well-to-do families created

a vacuum in the village life. Only those who were not in a position to move remained there to bear the wrath of both the threatening parties, i.e., the police and the terrorists.

The case of one family may be taken up to illustrate this situation. A well to do Jat Sikh family of Sajjan Singh Nambardar having 30 acres of land and a small flour mill had to migrate to Amritsar after the killing of one of his sons by the terrorists. According to him, around mid night a group of terrorists knocked at his door and demanded the scooter. After opening the door, his son not only refused to oblige them but also confronted them with his licensed double barrel gun. He opened fire at the terrorists but was hit by a bullet fired by the terrorists and died on the spot. After that Sajjan Singh's family became the target of attack by the terrorists. His second son was employed in the health department. Sajjan Singh decided to migrate to Amritsar for the security of his family. He constructed a house there and has decided to stay in Amritsar permanently. He looks after his agricultural farm from this place which is 20 kms from his residence. This represents a category of migrants whose choice/decision to migrate was determined by the facility of choice provided by their jobs, familiarity or/and available resources. Most of them practically turned their backs on their villages so far as living there was concerned. The facilities of education for children or supply of electricity in the city seemed to make them feel it was good they migrated to the city. Fear of terrorists provided the opportune push for migration.

2. Another village of our study, viz., Bhikhiwind in Tarn Taran police district presented an illustration of a very different type. This village witnessed mass migration of Hindu traders in the early part of the year 1990. Bhikhiwind consists of distinctly demarcated rural and urban areas. The rural area is completely dominated by the Jat Sikhs and the urban by the Hindu traders. All business activity falls in the urban area. In the beginning of 1990 a few targetted killings of Hindus were carried out by the terrorists. This led to their migration to Amritsar. Altogether 700 families migrated from the area. There was a major protest from various organisations such as the Hindu Suraksha Samiti, Hindu Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal etc.

against the failure of the police to provide security to the Hindus. The district administration alongwith some non government organisations had to make temporary arrangement for the stay of these families in and around Durgiana Temple in Amritsar. The only source of income of these families was their business activity in Bhikhiwind. Among them were all categories of businessmen running small, medium and large scale business. As a result the business activity came to a standstill in that area. The administration came under great pressure to provide the needed security. Ultimately the district administration made special arrangements for the transportation of the male members to go to Bhikhiwind under police security and open their shops in the morning and return to Amritsar in the evening. They were provided heavily guarded buses for that purpose, since the security could be provided only during the day time. This arrangement continued till normalcy returned to Punjab. After that almost all the families have returned to Bhikhiwind.

Some of our respondents explained the fall out of this development. The food grain business, i.e. grain trade, was largely under the control of Hindus before their migration to Amritsar. They had very old relations with the producers of the area. The marketing season of wheat and rice is about one and a half months and during this period there is a glut of produce in the market. A Hindu trader weighed the grains 400-500 gms extra per bag. It was a cheating which had become acceptable to farmers because of the marketing complexities in Punjab. Part of the reason being given was that in most of the cases the farmers did not bring the grains to the market after winnowing it to perfection. But once the traditional Hindu traders were replaced by the Jat Sikh traders for a short period, the farmers had a very novel experience. As our respondents explained the new traders started weighing 4 to 5 kg extra per bag as against the earlier maximum of half a kg. The new practice appeared to be a painful and intolerable extortion to the farmers. But the farmers were helpless in the given context of lawlessness. They had no alternative but to sell their produce to their fellow Jat traders. Secondly, they found that the new traders did not honour their words while

making payments. They lacked business traits. Their lust to become rich overnight made them dishonest. The farmers suffered the agony for a period of 1-2 years. Once normalcy returned the Hindu traders went back to the area and almost all the farmers switched over to the old traders for selling their produce.

3. In contrast to the foregoing illustrations there is another side to the picture. A Hindu doctor of a government primary health centre was not allowed by the people to leave the village even at the height of terrorist violence there. When the army intervened to escort him out of the village, the people, following an organised resistance, got him released publicly and determined to provide him non-government armed security. The person in question was Dr. Brajesh Sharma who joined the Government Primary Health Centre (PHC) in village Mattewal on 13 April 1978, exactly the day from which the beginning of violence in Punjab is traced. He belonged to Jaipur (Rajasthan). With his hard work and dedication he developed the dispensary to a mini hospital not through any major grant from the government, but with the involvement of the people of the local area. Now there is a mini operation theatre with a power generator and a few halls for indoor patients. Every Thursday during those bad days, he performed 5-7 major/minor surgical operations free of cost while patients were free to donate voluntarily to a fund for further development. Besides that, he examined on an average 400 outdoor patients everyday.

He was so popular with the people of not only that village but also the surrounding villages that the top level terrorists including Sital Singh Mattewal, the Chief of Dashmesh Regiment, was known to have touched the doctor's knees in reverence. The doctor's was a household name in that area. Though the terrorists used to get medical aid from him, he never bothered regarding the identity and position of the patient. According to him, he treated all those who came to him, including the alleged terrorists, according to the ethics of medical profession.

4. We also noticed a few cases of migration due to police harassment and torture. This, however, happened in those villages where the high intensity of violence had led to encounters and killings by both the police and the terrorists. When a young boy joined a terrorist group, members of his family normally became the target of the police harassment and raids. In some cases the police harassed those families where the terrorists used to take shelter and food whether through coercion or with the family's consent. Besides harassment and torture of the family members/relatives in order to force the terrorists to surrender, there was a high incidence of extortion of bribes by the policemen for letting off the members. Our respondents in a number of villages recalled how the arrest, torture and release of "suspects" had become an industry. The primary 'push' factor in such villages related, not to terrorist violence as such, but to the harassment by the police.

The parents of a woman terrorist for instance migrated from Butala to Amritsar mainly because of unending police harassment and raids. Kulbir Kaur alias Malka married a high level terrorist, Joga Singh of Khanpur village, belonging to KLF. After getting married she was involved in terrorist related activities alongwith her husband. Both of them finally died in the same encounter with police. Her family was constantly harassed, interrogated and maltreated by the police whenever there was any violent occurrence in the area. Her father, Jasbir Singh, migrated to Amritsar along with his family and returned to the village only after normalcy was restored in Punjab.

Another case relates to the whole family of Jarnail Singh of Khojala village which migrated to Batala. Jarnail Singh was a middle level farmer with 7 acres of land. His son Navroop Singh joined terrorism. This village was also famous for being a stronghold of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The police started raiding and picking up the members of his family whenever there was any violence in the area. Jarnail Singh was taken away to police station and interrogation centres many times where he was allegedly tortured severely and humiliated. As a consequence he and all other members of the family left the village for good and settled in Batala.

It may be stated, therefore, that two distinct patterns of migration emerged in our villages during the period of terrorist violence. Firstly, the Hindus belonging to various castes migrated due to the threat to their lives from terrorists. They constituted a majority among the migrants. Secondly, the Sikhs, belonging to different castes also migrated, but their migration was related to other reasons of threat from the terrorists including the safety of their women. The police harassment was a distinct cause in certain other cases of migration of Sikh families.

Most of the Sikhs however shared their reasons for migration with those of the Hindus. The implication was that as against the general perception the character of terror was not so much discriminatory in its consequence.

6

People's Resistance Against Terrorism

Terrorism is considered a weapon of the insurgents who plan to bring about a change in the existing social and political order. It acquires, by virtue of its ideology, a discriminatory character of violence, identifying the friends and foes in the struggle. Whether and how far that character is actually maintained, compromised, or altered in practice may depend on a variety of factors. In the case of terrorism in Punjab, the ideology was more or less clearly articulated in the resolutions of the Panthic Committee/s and their armed organisations which traced its genesis from the ideology propounded earlier by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. All those who were opposed to their struggle were "enemies" to be silenced, compromised or liquidated. Besides the agents of the Indian state, Hindus were identified as the clear "other". The purpose of targeting the latter was to make them flee Punjab and creating conditions for migration of Sikhs living outside Punjab to their "homeland". The communists of all shades who strongly opposed the religion based communal politics of separation and the members of other political affiliations were also in the opposite camp. The appeal of communist ideology and the tradition of armed and popular resistance against oppression has been particularly strong in Punjab, though it is not so reflected in the electoral politics. Normative confrontation or resistance against the Khalistani terrorism was believed to be inevitable. The methods of resistance by the people against the state and the phenomenon of terrorism depended upon the resources and the levels of ideological motivation of the opposition forces. Besides organised armed or/and passive resistance, there are the 'weapons' which the

weak people use against oppression and intimidation. The latter are no less important in determining the ultimate fate of a movement. Bloch's study of French rural history underlined that the peasantry could achieve more through their everyday struggle than through the organised public opposition, since the latter invited more oppressive measures by the state.¹ Following the lead, Scott recently conducted an empirical study in Malaysia. His findings showed how the peasantry's everyday resistance against the landowners in their daily life and work proved to be an effective strategy in the face of a far more powerful and ruthless adversary.² The case of people's resistance against widespread terrorist violence is, however, of a different class altogether. There was a point in learning about not only the evidence and character of armed and public resistance, but also about the coping strategies or tactics followed by the people, the level of tacit acceptance or rejection of or indifference towards the objectives of the terrorists in their local situations.

The intimations and common knowledge gathered in that regard is discussed here in two parts. Those activities of the people which manifest everyday resistance and may be described as "weapons of the weak" are included in Part I. The second part includes some case studies of armed confrontation organised by certain families or groups in the villages of study on account of ideological consideration and/or vendetta.

I. Everyday Resistance

It was difficult to know exactly the year when this kind of resistance to terrorism began in Punjab. On the basis of the field experience it may be stated that it became a part of common knowledge sometime in 1989. The widespread but quiet resistance of that kind symbolized rejection of the terrorists and their ideology under a moral conviction. Other actions of the people aimed at belittling the authority of the social codes imposed by the terrorists in the same fashion as they circumvented or dodged the law and authority of the state relating, for example, to land ceilings, distillation of liquor, payment of dowry in marriages and female infanticide. Such a form of resistance may be discussed as under.

1. In March 1987, the terrorists announced a 13-point social reform programme. The Sikhs were asked not to consume meat and liquor, not to give and accept dowry and to confine the marriage party to a maximum of 11 persons. There were other items too in the programme, but the above mentioned touched them the most in terms of their style of life or social honour. During the high tide of terrorism the butchers' shops were almost closed in the villages. In Butala where there were ten meat shops selling lamb and chicken; these had to be closed. Similarly, the village markets, where a few drunkards were the normal source of entertainment for others every evening, lost such spectacles. One could no more see a drunkard in the streets in the evenings. Similarly, the size of the marriage party was reduced to the prescribed number after certain incidents of the terrorists humiliating a large marriage party. The practice of giving dowry also apparently declined and the people stopped the practice of *vikhala*³ (display of the goods given in dowry).

But did the people stop the above practices in reality? This was the query we made in all the villages of our study. The response was unanimous. "Apparently, yes". There seemed to be a visible impact of the commands of social reform. But in reality this did not happen. The people adopted simple strategies to dodge the commands. The butchers would clandestinely send the meat to the homes of regular customers. In the cities where the presence of police and other armed forces of the state was overwhelming most butchers did not close down their shops. The village people would buy their quota of meat from the cities.

Similarly people could not be prevented from consumption of liquor. In Punjab there are three sources of liquor, *viz.* government auctioned and licensed shops, centres of clandestine sale of illegally distilled liquor and the liquor venders who carry a home delivery service. It was interesting to learn that all the three practices continued. There was decline only in the consumption of liquor in public places or functions, particularly in marriages. There is no other area more prominent than the meat and liquor consumption in which the terrorists were so thoroughly defied. It may be

mentioned that after the declaration of the social reform programme, the terrorists did attack some of those who violated the orders.

Why did the people continue to consume what was prohibited? There is no denying the fact that eating habits are socially constructed. It is not possible to change these overnight. However, the meat and liquor consumption is not that much a part of the tradition. In fact, the rise in poultry food consumption is a recent phenomenon. People started consuming these items in a big way only after the Green Revolution. The command of the terrorists could be understood in this context. The same context also makes the clandestine consumption of liquor and meat as a form of resistance.

The responses to the size of a marriage party and to dowry were somewhat different from the above. Whereas the lower middle and poor peasantry considered these to be good steps, the well-to-do felt oppressed. The opposition came from the latter, though the others did not lag behind in giving and accepting dowry. This was done indirectly. After all, giving money in cash could not be detected. The rich peasantry began to organize marriages of their daughters in the cities. The rise in terrorism in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts coincided with the mushroom growth of 'marriage palaces' in towns and cities. Thus the pattern of size of marriage party and consumption of liquor, meat and poultry were tackled by arranging marriages in the cities.⁴ Organisation of marriage ceremonies in marriage 'palaces' in towns started winning prestige.

The terrorists started large scale extortions in the late eighties. Troubled by the regular demands of money and threat to life, the people including rich peasants started migrating to the cities. The better off among those who remained in the villages were the likely targets. It was understood that indication of possession of money by a family could draw the attention of the terrorists. Thus many people stopped showing any signs of possessing money. Renovation or construction of houses was stopped. So was the purchase of new tractors, scooters and other expensive gadgets. It is evident from the fact that after terrorism was over, there was

a spurt in construction activities in the villages. During terrorism even collapsed walls were rarely rebuilt.

The major incidence of quiet but widespread resistance was to be found among the peasantry in the form of the sale of scooters. In Vadala Kalan for instance we discovered that practically every family had disposed off the scooter/motor cycle or loaned it out to friends/relatives in the cities. It may be noted that the Khalistani terrorists were operating in a state which had a fairly developed network of roads. In such a situation quick mobility was central to terrorist operations. Therefore, the terrorists had started snatching scooters on a large scale. Scooters/motor cycles were ideal for the movement on link roads. Those living in villages, on or close to the link roads, used scooters as the most convenient vehicles. Such people became the targets of the terrorist boys. When the latter came to ask for a scooter from a family there was no alternative but to comply.

The problem for an owner did not relate merely to the financial loss. Greater trouble followed when a terrorist abandoned the vehicle after an operation and it was recovered by the police. No villager could report to the police immediately after the scooter was taken away, for fear of the terrorists' wrath. So, notwithstanding the consequent discomfort for themselves, the scooter owners started selling the vehicles. The tractor owners told us that they started keeping the tyres of their tractors deflated. Other methods included removal of a piece of machinery, cutting the fuel connection and keeping the fuel tank more or less empty so as to offer a workable excuse that the tractor was not in working order or required repairs. These were, as we learnt, fairly common practices, which the helpless people followed to put up a form of passive resistance.

The everyday resistance came from the social and religious groups which were supposed to be the support base of terrorism. The Jat Sikhs turned against the terrorists first by not supporting their activities or by quietly hampering their operations. It may be noted that the highest tide of terrorism was achieved in 1990 and the very next year it began to decline fast. The so far manipulated support base had crumbled. Something which could not be specifically investigated but

was sufficiently suggested was that the police success related to the cautious but widening scale of information about the whereabouts of the terrorists provided by the members of this social group.

More significant incidents of resistance related, however, to open and direct confrontation of the terrorists by individuals, families and organised groups.

II. Open Resistance

A few investigative reports including cases of open resistance are already available.⁵ One of the comprehensive reports recorded a variety of forms, identifying 25 cases of individual resistance, 8 by families and relatives together and 29 cases of organised collective resistance, along with a number of rallies and public demonstrations organised by political groups/parties. Those who participated in such resistance came from diverse socio-political backgrounds and ideological orientations.⁶

In the villages of our study we learnt about a variety of cases of resistance. There were instances, for example, in villages such as Sehnsra and Ghasitpur where a village notable or a Sarpanch offered an armed challenge or cases of armed members of a whole family which offered a prolonged resistance in repeated exchanges of fire. It turns out that in the detailed studies given in this chapter practically all those who were involved in armed confrontation with the terrorists had an ideological affinity or/and affiliation with one or the other Communist group or party. However, the social dynamics of confrontation pointed to a complex set of social forces operating in a particular situation. Each case study presented here is broadly representative of a particular mode or rationale of resistance involving variant shapes and motivations and their impact upon subsequent events. What came out prominently from our field observations was that wherever individuals or groups put up a successful open resistance, whether ideologically motivated or resulting from a sheer sense of personal honour, it pointed to a noticeable impact on the subsequent behaviour of the others in the village—reducing the intensity of migration from the village

and also the fresh recruitment of boys to terrorist organisations. That is how our respondents felt.

1. Vadala Kalan

The family of a middle level Jat Sikh farmer was attacked in broad daylight at about 2.00 p.m. by the terrorists on May 30, 1989. The family was caught unawares because generally the terrorists used to attack targetted people only during the night. During this attack the head of the family, Mangta Singh, who was 65 yrs old at that time, was killed on the spot and one of his sons was seriously injured. Mangta Singh was affiliated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The injured son of Mangta Singh recovered after 3-4 months of treatment.

Mangta Singh owned 28 acres of land and was settled in a farmhouse at the outskirts of the village. He had seven sons, three of them were married at the time of incident. The two elder sons were employed in the Thein Dam Project as semi-skilled workers. The rest were living in a joint family. Three of his sons were matriculates and the rest were illiterate. After the injured son recovered, the first task he and his brothers undertook was to identify the terrorist who had killed their father. In the late 80s many groups of terrorists had sprung up in the region. Though it was not easy to identify the killer and his terrorist group, yet they succeeded in indentifying him as well as his organisation. The killer was Jarnail Singh of nearby village Butari and was active in BTFK (Manochahal). An F.I.R. was lodged against Jarnail Singh and the police started raiding his house and picked up the members of his family. The father of the terrorist was, during those days, a resourceful person as was usually the case with the brothers and fathers of the terrorists. When the police started harassing the father he started threatening Mangta Singh's family asking them to withdraw their F.I.R., which was refused. Jarnail Singh's father alongwith another person went to Mangta Singh's farmhouse and asked them either to withdraw the F.I.R. or be ready to face the consequences. During a heated exchange between the two, Mangta Singh's son opened fire with his gun and killed him on the spot. According to the

sons, they did not want to kill the father but were only after his son who had killed their father Mangta Singh.

After that incident both brothers Sukhdev Singh and Banta Singh, 19 and 20 years old respectively, surrendered before the police. Both confessed their crime. Both of them were sentenced to life imprisonment and were lodged in Amritsar Central Jail. Meanwhile one of the two brothers, Sukhdev Singh has been released on bail. Even now the members of Mangta Singh's family nurse a regret that they could not locate and punish Jarnail Singh who had murdered their father.

We tried to locate Jarnail Singh and came to learn that at the end of militancy, he surrendered before the police and offered his services in apprehending the surviving terrorists. The case of Mangta Singh's murder failed because of lack of clear evidence. Later Jarnail Singh reportedly killed his wife and he is also in the Central Jail Amritsar, convicted under IPC 302.

After the killing of Mangta Singh, there were two kinds of options before the other members of the family: (a) to lie low, seek security or migrate to an urban area, (b) to challenge and confront the terrorists. They chose the latter course, more because of sense of family honour than for any ideological reason. It is obvious from the fact that after killing Jarnail Singh's father they surrendered to the police. The concerned police officer advised them to forget the incident, and to go back to the village. However, as told by the eldest brother of the family, they reacted by saying that the people should know that they had taken the revenge of their father's death. In fact, they insisted on being tried. This sense of honour was derived from the traditional peasant sense of living with dignity.

(a) Provision for Security at the Farmhouse

Mangta Singh's family lived in a farmhouse about 2 Kms outside the village and the place seemed to be highly insecure during the days of terrorism. It was not connected with a *pucca* road. Such places were regarded as safe havens for the terrorists because the policemen avoided venturing into such areas. There was no other farmhouse nearby. The movement

of people in the villages used to stop after sunset. Even the policemen did not normally budge out during the night and it is only the terrorists who moved around freely. So the people had to fend for their security.

Since the farmhouse did not have a boundary wall, the first thing the family did was to build a 6 feet high wall all around the farmhouse, fitted on top with barbed wire and connected the same with a live electricity wire and passed the current through it at night. Floodlights were fitted on the four corners of the wall. In case of electricity failure, they used search lights. Secondly, they constructed a double storey high tower at the entrance. It was without a stair case. They used a wooden ladder to go up and lift it up into the tower. From the high tower a regular watch was kept on the movements of the outsiders all around. Toilets and bathrooms were constructed inside the house.

As they took us around, they told us that they were pained that a valuable citrus orchard had to be chopped off because the plants obstructed the watch on the movements of the terrorists in the area.

(b) Arms and Ammunition

The family had no modern weapon prior to the terrorist attack. They had only a few traditional ones. After the death of their father and a greater threat to the family they bought two Double barrel guns immediately. Licence for weapons was promptly issued by the district administration. It was a part of the policy of the state that genuine persons who were under threat from the terrorists would be given immediate permission to buy weapons. The district administration also provided them with 3 rifles and one sten-gun. In addition, two special police officers were attached to this family for their protection even though various terrorists groups operating in the area had warned them against the taking of police help.

According to the members of the family, a total of 5 armed attacks were launched by the terrorists; all these were repulsed by them. The family did not suffer any loss after their *morchabandi*. The sharp-shooters in Mangta Singh's family used to fire in advance once they saw any movement at a distance from their farmhouse. Getting ammunition from the

police was no problem. All empty shells were deposited and fresh ones were issued by the local police.

(c) Routine Schedule During the Period

The family, more or less, remained cut off from their routine work and relationships. They had neither a telephone nor were they getting regular newspaper. They remained in touch about the happenings around them and in Punjab through Radio and Television. No outsider (even begger) or suspected person was allowed to enter the gate. Even for the construction of the boundary wall trusted persons were engaged. They reduced their dependence upon others. The interaction even with their close relatives was restricted. All work related with farming was done only during the day time. They had little problem in marketing the crop because the local people and their well wishers helped them quietly and indirectly. They would not inform any outsider while moving out of the farmhouse and maintained anonymity in their routine work. Occasionally they also moved out with armed guards but alertness was the watchword. The surveillance against attack and their alertness seemed to be the reason which provided safety to the family. The female members of the family, though illiterate, remained reportedly in high spirits and this was a motivating force for the male members to continue their fight against terrorists.

(d) Impact of this Resistance

It is difficult to gauge the specific impact of this resistance on the people in the village. The population of Vadala Kalan was over 4000. The village was not different from other villages in the area in terms of literacy, patterns of landholding, caste and social structure, or other related factors. The overall impact of this resistance could be gauged mainly from the response of our respondents in the village. The courage of that family was admired. An average of about 11 boys per village had joined terrorism. From this village only four boys had joined. Though there were different reasons for the boys' joining terrorist groups, one important reason seemed to be the visits of terrorists in the village luring the youth to emulate them through personal contact. The determined resistance of

one family limited the frequency of the visits of the terrorists groups in the village and might have been a constraining influence on the young boys. Secondly, out migration from the village was restricted to 12 families. A majority of these were Hindu families who owned both land and shops. With the return of normalcy, almost all of them have returned to the village.

2. Harsha Chhina

This village falls in Amritsar police district and is located on the periphery of Amritsar city on Ajnala Road. The population of this village is over five thousand. This village seems to be different from the other ones in Majha region in terms of the level of awareness and education among the people. It boasts of a large number of officers in civil, military, education and other fields. It remained a notable village during the country's freedom movement. Some prominent personalities of this village such as Baba Pala Singh had taken active part in both the Akali Movement in the 1920s and the freedom movement. Baba Achhar Singh Chhina who got his education from Moscow in 1920s was one of the well respected freedom fighters and communist leaders. He was elected M.L.A. in both the 1952 and 1957 elections. Later this village became a stronghold of the CPI (ML) - Chandrapulla Reddy group of Naxalites. The history of this village seemed to have a visible impact in the area as a number of prominent Naxalites emerged on the scene during the 70s and the 80s. The most well known ones were Baldev Singh Mann of a nearby village and Sarbjit Singh Bhattewad. Baldev Singh Mann did his post-graduation from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar in the late 70s and during his student life he was elected Sarpanch of his village unanimously. He organised political opposition against Bhindranwale's ideology and the terrorist movement through meetings, conventions and peace marches in this area and armed his group to fight the terrorists.

After the killing of Baldev Singh Mann by the terrorists on 26 September 1986 the target killing of this group became common and they were asked to give up their campaign. They were also the fighters against the state and so were opposed

to the police repression. The CPI (ML) people not only decided to take revenge of the killing of their leader but also to confront and expose what they described as reactionary forces of the terrorists and the state.

After the death of Mann, Sukhraj Singh and Iqbal Singh of Harsha Chhina led the fight against terrorism. In this context they organised a massive rally at their village Bus Stand (Kukranwala) on the first death anniversary of Mann on 26 September 1987. A general consensus was evolved to sharpen the people's movement against both Khalilistani terrorism and "state terrorism." A group of terrorists tried to disturb the rally by frightening the people gathered there. They were however challenged successfully by the armed organisers.

After that a series of attacks and attempts were made by terrorists on these people and twelve of the CPI (ML) workers were killed in this area during the period of terrorism. Four well organised attacks were made by various terrorist groups on the houses of Sukhraj Singh and Iqbal Singh in Harsha Chhina village. These were repulsed. By that time a retired army man Hardev Singh 'Babbu' also joined them. In another attack on Iqbal Singh's house one terrorist was killed, another was injured and the rest ran away. It was Hardev Singh who killed that terrorist. After that the terrorists started fearing them, particularly Hardev Singh. Three more attempts were made by the terrorists in which rocket launchers, light machine guns and other sophisticated weapons were used, but they could not do any harm to the opponents. The last attack on them was made in August 1989 in which more than 28 terrorists took part. This was also decisively repulsed by them.

These anti-terrorist fighters were reported to have knowledge about the profiles of the terrorists, their socio-economic background, level of understanding, motivation and ideology. They regarded the terrorists as dacoits and criminals and believed that such type of movements could create only chaos and lawlessness in the society and were bound to fail.

A total of ten boys from this village had joined terrorism. The most prominent among them was Satnam Singh, *alias* Satta Chhina. During those days he was one of the prominent

terrorists and subsequently became Lt. General of BTFK (Sangha). Both Sukhraj Singh and Iqbal Singh were familiar with his family.

Following Satta Chhina group's frustration and sense of humiliation at the hands of their enemies in their own area, they were in search of a *modus vivendi* through which they could trap any one of the three prominent challengers. Sukhraj Singh and Iqbal Singh were also apprehensive about the possibility of devious moves that the terrorists may make to avenge the killing of their fellow.

The terrorists of Satta Chhina group formulated a plan in early 1990 to trap the soft target, *viz.* Hardev Singh. Hardev used to go to his fields to bring fodder for his buffaloes in the morning always carrying his double barrel gun on his shoulder. In spite of the load of fodder on his head Hardev Singh's gun and shooting skill seemed to scare the terrorists who wanted to kill him. So they planned to lure him through the services of a young lady Jasmeet Kaur who was an active supporter of Satta's group. Jasmeet Kaur was the daughter of a police officer and reportedly had intimate relations with Satnam Singh. Our respondents reported about a rumour in the village that Satnam Singh had married that daughter of the police officer. The story of the incident as recounted by diverse groups of people in the village was as follows.⁷ One fine morning, as per the plan, Jasmeet Kaur accosted Hardev Singh just outside the village while he was bringing fodder. She was riding a moped and after seeing him from a little distance switched off her moped. She was reportedly well dressed with a bag on her shoulders. When Hardev Singh came close to her, she pretended that her moped had gone out of order. She told him that she was a journalist and engaged him in conversation and asked him about one Hardev Singh Fauji of Harsha Chhina village. When he asked about her purpose, she stated that her editor had come to know about that man's bravery and she had been sent to interview him. He told her that he was the person she was looking for and agreed to give the interview. They fixed a meeting for the next day and met at Kukranwala. One version was that Jasmeet expressed a desire to marry him. In any case Hardev Singh

did not share this information about the incident with his comrades. According to Sukhraj Singh, they felt a little concerned that Hardev did not meet them for two or three days. But since he and Iqbal Singh were busy in preparations for the marriage of a nephew of Sukhraj, they could not make further enquiries. During that period Jasmeet Kaur met Hardev Singh and took him to the outskirts of the village (ostensibly on their way to Amritsar) where they met a group of terrorists led by Satta Chhina. Next morning the people learnt about Hardev's murder. His body was tied with a pipal tree with the limbs of his body slashed by a sharp weapon.

Thereafter, both Sukhraj Singh and Iqbal Singh held the fort. Their houses at the top of a mound in the village were close to each other. The location of their houses was effective both for defence against a terrorist attack and also for attacking them if they were found in the vicinity. They had constructed bunkers on the top of their houses and could go to each other's house during attack by the terrorists. Sometimes they used to sit in each other's *morcha* (bunker) during nights.

They reportedly moved around freely in a group of 5-6 armed comrades and used an open jeep for going out of the village. The district administration provided them weapons and ammunition. Later it became a common belief that their fight against state oppression became less important than the fight against the ideology of Khalistan and the terrorists in the area.

3. Bhikhiwind

The village of Bhikhiwind in the Tam Taran police district became known for a legendary armed resistance against the organised forces of Khalistani terrorism by one joint family which was awarded a *Shaurya Chakra*, the highest bravery award for civilians, by the President of India in 1994. The two brothers, Balwinder Singh and Ranjit Singh and their wives Jagdish Kaur and Baljit Kaur, with the support of other members of the family and relatives were able not only to openly challenge the terrorists in their den but also to repulse more than 18 major armed attacks during a period of about 4 years. Paradoxically, the village was also known for

the largest incidence of migration of about 700 families of Hindus from the urban part of the twin settlements of Bhikhiwind.

Both the brothers were activists of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and had been closely associated with the party's student wing, the Students Federation of India (SFI), since their college days. Jagdish Kaur was also a student leader during her college days in Batala Police District.

However, the family was marked for death by the terrorists due to the circumstances prevailing in the village. Balwinder Singh was not a prominent leader but became so due to his encounters with the terrorists. In the village he was known as "Comrade". Another young boy Surinder Singh belonging to his village was also studying in his college.

Surinder Singh took up weapons and became an Area Commander of BKI. He was not the typical "boy" who joined terrorism out of fun. Balwinder Singh had found him to be a somewhat fanatic Sikh who believed in the ideal of Khalistan and was also convinced that the Communists were dangerous for the Sikh faith and should be eliminated. For him Balwinder Singh was his enemy and was to be dealt with. But Balwinder Singh chose to confront him and his associates. In the process the confrontation escalated to unknown heights. In the biggest attack on Balwinder Singh on 30th September 1990, a large number of terrorists of various organisations were reported to have been involved. The encounter in which modern weapons were used started in the evening and went on till mid-night. Balwinder Singh and his colleagues also used automatic rifles, Light Machine Guns and other sophisticated weapons in this battle in which the terrorists were forced to withdraw.

It may be noted that in the initial phases of their resistance, the police did not help them. But later on they got some help. The state police provided them a large number of sophisticated weapons including Light Machine Guns and A.K. 47s and special security guards besides the security guards of the party. They had no problem in getting ammunition from the local police station.

Almost all the attacks on them were made during the night. Their neighbours used to shift to safe houses in the village during nights. Those who could not afford to join them

were advised to stay away from the scene and were provided local protection.

Since both the brothers were employees of Punjab State, they had to remain on long leave with or without pay because of constant threat to their lives. After 1992, whereas Ranjit Singh reported on duty Balwinder Singh resigned from service in order to pursue a political career.

This middle class Jat Sikh family owned 10 acres of land, all of which remained practically uncultivated from 1988 to 1992. Whereas farming activity was full of risk for the family, nobody else from the village seemed prepared to rent the land on lease or crop-sharing basis due to threats from the terrorists. A warning was reportedly issued that if anybody took over the cultivation of their land, he and his family would be eliminated.

The family, however, earned the respect of the people. After 1992, Balwinder Singh was unanimously nominated the President of Bhikhiwind Truck Union even though he had no truck of his own. This happened when only a truck owner could normally become the member of that Union. The Union had over 300 trucks registered with it. Given the large scale business of transportation of food grains, the Union itself had a big income for serving the collective interests of the transporters and the employees. With Balwinder Singh as the Union chief, the truck owners seemed confident that the policemen or other state functionaries would not harass them for bribes or forcibly take away the trucks for their personal or state purposes.

4. Some other instances of resistance

One of the prominent other instances relates to the role of Jiwan Singh Umranganal. A senior Akali leader, Umranganal was a minister in Prakash Singh Badal's governments in 1969-70 and 1977-80. He became a target of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale after the April 1978 armed conflict with the Nirankaris in Amritsar. Jiwan Singh belonged to village Umranganal (near Beas) which is close to the Dam Dami Taksal's headquarter at Mehta. Part of the reason for his opposition to Bhindranwale might be the clash of political interest in a constituency which Jiwan Singh regarded as his

pocket borough. In the March 1979 election to the SGPC he defeated Bhindranwale's closest aide Bhai Amrik Singh in the Beas constituency. Thereafter, as Bhindranwale's fire spitting militancy spread, Umranangal remained the only prominent Akali leader, who publicly campaigned against Bhindranwale's actions and the Khalistan terrorist movement. His son Sukhdev Singh was killed in 1987 and several attempts were made to kill him, but he continued his fight on public platforms and by public propaganda in the area believed to have been under the strongest influence of Dam Dami Taksal. He also criticised the traditional Akali leadership for not coming out openly against terrorist violence. Later he resigned from the membership of the SGPC in protest against its leadership. His main grouse against the functionaries of this institution was that they had failed to maintain the sanctity of the Golden Temple. He therefore received considerable support from the state in the shape of arms, ammunition, security guards and vehicles for his fight. As a consequence a degree of resistance by the people of Radha Soami sect and other elements was kept alive even though he could not build his own organised force for resistance.

Another case was of a group of Nihangs under the command of Taruna Dal's (a sect of *Nihangs*) Deputy Chief Baba Ajit Singh Poohla. Poohla was regarded as a politically well connected person. He was reported to have formed a hit squad of his followers to take on the militants. The base camp of Baba Poohla was in village Kartarpur near Butala in Majitha Police district. He and other leaders of Taruna Dal consistently opposed the terrorist movement in this area which was a stronghold of the terrorists. Poohla was heavily armed with sophisticated weapons provided to him by the state government besides a bullet proof car and security guards. His activities took the shape of direct enmity with Joga Singh, a Lt. General of Khalistan Liberation Army. Part of the reason was their competing interests relating to control of Gurdwaras. Poohla's utterances against Khalistan and terrorism were a challenge to the terrorist organisations in the area and so he was placed on their list. This led to a chain of killings of each other's followers and other members of their families. In an ambush laid by Joga Singh's men three Nihang followers of

Ajit Singh Poohla were killed and Poohla himself was injured. In a revenge attack Poohla's Nihangs killed seven members of Joga's family including women and children. The very next day Joga Singh's group attacked the family of a Nihang close to Poohla and killed nine members of his family.

In another case a middle aged *amritdhari* widow Amrik Kaur of Amarkot village in Tarn Taran police district gave a tough fight to various terrorist groups. Her fight started with the killing of her husband by the terrorists in 1988-89. She belonged to a well-to-do Jat Sikh family owning more than 25 acres of land. When her husband was killed the first thing she did was to buy a revolver for her security. She also constructed a *pacca Morcha* on the roof of her house. A high boundary wall of the house was also constructed. She was provided security guards, arms and a (Gypsy) jeep. Our respondents from the neighbouring villages of our study reported about a number of attacks made on her life but she and her security guards beat them back. There were other cases of resistance by individuals with or without their small weapons or without in our villages.

The logic of resistance whether through passive methods or active ones of opposition and confrontation pointed to the level of acceptance or rejection of the objectives and commands of the armed advocates of Khalistan. The people who launched and actively participated in the said movement in the name of their religion and community interest and those who resisted these belonged to the same community. Practically all of them on both sides were Jat Sikhs. It was clear that the general mass of the people were too scared to oppose or resist the terrorists. Most others chose mainly to dodge them. Yet the incidence of disregard of commands relating to the so called social reforms was widespread. Only a small number of individuals who possessed their own weapons could have dared to deny them entry into their homes at night.

The cases of open armed opposition on the other hand, pointed to a convergence of personal reasons of vengeance and ideological impulses. One was reflected sharply in the case of Vadala Kalan and the other in cases of Harsha Chhina and Bhikhiwind. The impulse for revenge or vindication of personal honour, traditionally regarded as a trait of Jats was,

according to our respondents, a major factor in their determination to oppose. Among the cases of public opposition in our villages, clearly the major ideological force behind it, except in the case of Jiwan Singh Umranangal and Ajit Singh Poohla were the communist parties. It is no wonder that, as we noticed earlier, among the political men killed by the terrorists, the largest number belonged to the communist parties. What our field study shows, however, is that most of those who determined to resist the terrorists with weapons in a planned fashion proved, in effect, to be less vulnerable than those who remained ambivalent. Availability of sophisticated weapons which was possible only with the support of state police and administration appeared to have been a crucial factor in all the cases of sustained open resistance. That may well have been a factor in determining whether and how far could they oppose the state and police repression on the people alongside the fight against Khalistani terrorism. Whereas the armed resisters denied capitulation on their part in that regard, the impression which we got from our respondents was that the communists fought as much an ideological war in defence of the people as the state's proxy war against secessionism. However, the personal courage and bravery of the individuals in these cases of resistance was to our villagers, a source of inspiration in an otherwise highly demoralising sense of all round submission to the "degenerate outlaws". In the end it may be stated that in all cases of armed resistance the help of the state police in providing arms, ammunition and some guards was very crucial in determining the outcome. At one point of time the state tended to assist any one who could dare the terrorists.

Notes

¹Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Character*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

²James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasants Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

³*Vikhala* is a practice according to which a few members of the bridegroom's marriage party are invited to the bride's house where the items given in dowry are displayed and a list of the items is read out. This public display of dowry had serious sociological implications.

First, in a situation of divorce, those items could be retrieved by the bride's parents without any problem. Secondly, it was assumed among peasants that the dowry was also a form of payment of the daughter's share in her parental property.

⁴In retrospect it seems that the terrorists were hardly enthusiastic about the reforms. The manner in which the marriage of the sister of a prominent terrorist belonging to Sultanwind was celebrated in Amritsar city indicated a prominent disregard of the edict.

The consumption of cough syrups as a substitute to alcohol and opium by the terrorists was another significant indicatin of that kind (see Harish K. Puri, Paramjit S. Judge and Jagroop Sekhon, *op. cit.*, p. 52).

⁵Notable among various records of individual and group public resistance and confrontation with terrorists are the following two reports:

1. All India Federation of Organisations for Democratic Rights (eds), *People of Punjab Fight Back: A Report to the Nation*, 1987.
2. Amolak Singh and Jaspal Jassi (eds.), *The Bleeding Punjab: A Report to the Nation*, Surkh Rekha and Inqalibi Jantak Leeh, Ludhiana, 1992.

⁶Amolak Singh and Jaspal Jassi, *op. cit.*

⁷This incident has also been covered by Talwinder Singh in his Punjabi novel *Yodhe* (Warriors). However, here our narration is based on the interviews and differs from that of the novel.

Conclusions

The findings of a field study, limited in scope and objectives, may not warrant a generalisation about the struggle for Khalistan or the Sikh militancy. However, these provide an illustrative insight from below. The picture of the ground reality shows at the outset that what happened in the villages had little relation to the political objectives or grievances of the Sikh community as articulated by leaders and spokesmen. The world of the "fighters" and the world of the ideologues of the movement appeared to co-exist and yet were separate from each other. The available account tended to question both the state's definition of the problem as a secessionist movement and the interpretation the ideologues and the leaders provided to the disparate events of terrorist violence, as evidence of a triumphant struggle for Khalistan. Each, in effect, contributed to validate the other's framework of discourse on the issue.

The reasons and motives of the "fighters", as we discovered, charted a kind of politics of the 'personal' which was at variance with the metanarratives of Sikh militancy. As it comes out in the pattern of their recruitment, ideological or religious orientation was not a requirement. Those who had the impulse for taking up arms or could be persuaded or forced to join, joined. Kinship and school or village connections with the early entrants marked the main routes of entry to a particular militant organisation. Those who came forward were mostly from such young boys belonging to poor Jat Sikh families of farmers, who seemed to have a low estimation or a sense of having been rendered useless by the existing conditions and had free time and impulse for excitement. Many of them were individually recognised by our respondents as *vehlar* (chronic do-nothings) or vagabonds—*awaaragardi karde san*. Sons of the Jat Sikhs were not inclined to do manual

labour. Whether it was viewed as an opportunity or an escape, the terrorist movement provided an opening. The data flies in the face of an explanation of this movement as resulting from unemployment of the educated youngmen. It may be a disturbing pointer to an unexplored aspect of social disorganisation in Punjab that our respondents across the board identified by name a majority of those who took to terrorism including the leaders as having joined for "fun or adventure" - *Shaukia taur te* or for making money. "*Mandheerai gayee see*" (the adolescent riffraff had joined) as the respondents stated. "They were enamored of weapons", we were told again and again. Access to weapons such as AK-47 Assault Rifles appeared to provide to the powerless an "entitlement to power". It was like acquiring the aspired for masculinity in the context of the gender messages contained in the political discourse.

The more resourceful entrepreneurs in the village tended to take advantage of the clout of the *Kharku Singhs* in the same fashion as they were inclined to use their police connections or powerful kinsmen in their conflicts, settling scores with the adversaries or in pursuit of other material and power interests. Yet it seemed that in the beginning many people were inclined to accept at face value the reasons which the "*mundey*" gave for their acts. The individuals in the movement were not significant in the context of the legitimising ideology behind the acts of terrorism. Therefore a belief persisted that the motivation was religio-political to begin with: the degeneration came later. The "fighters" described themselves and were referred to by others, as *Bhais* and *Babas* (terms of respect: the venerated, wise or the saintly). However, on person to person identification, none of them was known to have a religious orientation, let alone a fundamentalist bent of mind. Their commands relating to social codes were viewed as points for demonstrative assertion of power. Practically no "fighter" came to the notice of the villagers for articulation of a political or religious issue except in terms of symbolic reference to the dominating presence of the *Singhs*. We have seen that as per the ruling impulses of the "fighters", the terror and violence related largely to matters of personal or family disputes, vendetta, mercenary interests, sexual gratification

and general assertion of power and dominance in their villages. This also led in some cases to inter-group and intra-group warfare and killings.

Much against the normal expectation in such a struggle for achievement of freedom and sovereignty of the Sikhs, it was amazing that in fact the people of that community itself became the worst victims. 78% of those killed by the terrorists in our area were Sikhs. The self image of the macho Jat Sikh, known as a vengeful guardian of personal and family honour, was shattered when the male members failed to protect their women from the depredations of the preying gangs. Shame and revulsion among our respondents was marked by cryptic references to the demand for almonds, *desi ghee* and milk considered essential for enhancing virility which the "boys" relished. Hindus were targetted as the 'other' from the beginning, but the thrust was on forcing them to flee. The migration of Hindu traders appeared to promise new economic opportunities to some others. Yet the evidence pointed to sympathy with the beleaguered families and the efforts to maintain old ties.

What strikes most, however, is the preponderance of Jats in every aspect of terrorism whether in terms of the caste background of the terrorists and the victims or the context of disputes and actions. Even in the case of migrants, Jats constituted the second largest category. Since about two thirds of the Sikhs belonged to Jat caste, their centrality in the phenomenon may on the face of it appear to be axiomatic. What the field view suggests, however, is a close relation of the social dynamics among the Jats with the emergent character of terrorist violence. This view is different from the sponsoring ideology of Khalistan. The social scientists trying to make sense of the phenomenon may well benefit from social anthropological studies of Jat Sikhs. There may be a point in probing how far the difference between the character and social location of the ideologues and the participants was a factor in turning this apparently pre-organisational movement into one of violent actions far removed from ideological claims.

We have noticed cases of spontaneous and organised resistance against the terrorists particularly by the Communists

of different shades of ideology at a time of pervasive dominance of the terrorists in the countryside. However the decline of terrorist violence began when the Sikh masses joined in resistance, passive but large scale, through selling of their scooters, making tractors unusable by deflating the tyres, denying the "boys" shelter and finally providing crucial information to the police. It was found that when the police effectively chased the terrorists, killed them in large numbers and the movement collapsed, there was an unconcealed sense of relief in our villages. Atrocities committed by the police and the killing of suspects in fake encounters disturbed our respondents. Repeated references were made to terrorism becoming an industry for policemen. Yet at the end of the night as we have noticed there was a marked rationalisation for hard state approach in dealing with the terrorist violence. It was amazing for the people that when the police resolved to act, it was possible to tackle the situation so fast during 1991-92. In response to our queries many of the respondents wondered: why did the government and the police not act in that fashion earlier? At least in three villages we were confronted with a question posed to us: Was this long time allowance for anarchy a part of some grand design?

It is significant that following the end of the terrorist violence what struck the people most was not only the collapse of Khalistan movement but also the virtual disappearance of "the logic of the struggle", which the spokesmen of the movement had advanced. It made little impact on the agricultural production in the Punjab. Despite some incidents of mass killings of migrant Hindu labourers their regular influx in Punjab remained uninterrupted even during the days of terrorism. And surprisingly there has been little evidence of cultural sympathy which failed insurgencies often evoke in the form of literature on battles, idealism, heroism or the vision of the fighters. But how and why was violence on such a scale sustained in Punjab for so long? It remains a nagging question. In fact, the study may raise more questions than it answers.

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