of both. . . . To leave so important an issue, as the defence of India, to chance is to be guilty of the grossest crime.

Nobody will consent to the Muslim demand for Pakistan unless he is forced to do so. . . . It would be a folly not to face what is inevitable and face it with courage and common sense. Equally would it be a folly to lose the part one can retain in the vain attempt of preserving the whole.

These are the reasons why I hold that if the Musalmans will not yield on the issue of Pakistan then Pakistan must come. So far as I am concerned the only important question is: Are the Musalmans determined to have Pakistan? . . . Or does it represent their permanent aspiration? On this there may be difference of opinion. Once it becomes certain that the Muslims want Pakistan there can be no doubt that the wise course would be to concede the principle of it.

[From B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan; or, The Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker and Company, 1945), 343–345, 348–350, 352–364.]

GURBACHAN SINGH AND LAL SINGH GYANI: THE SIKHS' DILEMMA

Although the Sikhs of India numbered only about six million, they were the second-largest minority in India after the Muslims, and the one most disastrously affected by the partition. Perhaps they did not have the greatest number killed or the most property losses in absolute terms, but they were spread out in the Punjab, their longtime homeland, and mixed in with Muslims and Hindus on both sides of the eventual dividing line. When the division came, and animosities and killing raged, it became clear to British officials and to the Sikhs themselves that they would have to move in large numbers and make their place in India. They gave up rich agricultural lands and urban livelihoods and property. With a long history of adaptability, they did not move to squatter camps to live in poverty for the rest of their lives. More than any other refugees of the partition, they moved not only to East Punjab, but also throughout India, wherever they could make a good living. They also moved to the United Kingdom and later to the United States in considerable numbers. Eventually they gained their own state in the Indian Union, with Panjabi its state language and Chandigarh its capital (though shared with Haryana).

While the negotiations for the transfer of power were going on in the 1940s, the Sikhs were divided and torn. They hoped to have a large part of the Punjab, all the land east of the Chenab River, given to India. But the "other factors" to be taken into account by the boundary commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe did not weigh enough to give such a large part of the Punjab to India. Lahore and about 62 percent of the land and 55 percent of the population of the Punjab went to Pakistan, and the Sikhs had to stay there or move. Feeling, not unreasonably, that they would be slaughtered if they stayed, they moved.

Alan Campbell-Johnson, Mountbatten's press attaché, wrote in his account of June 14, 1947:

> We are in the heart of Sikh country here, and the prevailing atmosphere is one of tension and foreboding . . . they [the Sikhs] see the partition of India means substantially and irrevocably the partition of the Sikhs, and they feel themselves to be sacrificed on the altars of Muslim ambition and Hindu opportunism . . . No juggling of the Boundary Commission can prevent their bisection. They react accordingly and their leaders, hopelessly outmanoeuvred in the political struggle, begin to invoke more primitive methods.[31]

The Sikhs had started as a small group of Punjabi agriculturalists who followed a Guru with ideas slightly different from local religious practices of the fifteenth century; Guru Nanak wanted to go beyond existing religions to find and worship the one formless God. The Sikhs grew into a small religious group that eventually had to organize as a community, the Panth, for self-defense. After a history of frequent political clashes with the Mughal emperors, when the Mughals went into decline the Sikhs moved to control the Punjab. Under the leadership of Ranjit Singh, they continued their sovereignty over this area well into the nineteenth century. After Ranjit Singh's death, they came under pressure from the expanding British Raj: when two Sikh wars ended in 1849, the Sikh kingdom was incorporated into the British Empire. The days of independence and control in the Punjab, and their living sense of a community, remained in their memories and imaginations, for new possibilities seemed to open up with the imminent departure of the British. Some writers and leaders advocated a sovereign and independent Sikh state carved out from the Punjab, as do the two authors here. They put forth passionate arguments, but these could not outweigh the numbers calculated by the boundary-deciders, and the idea of a separate Sikh state did not go anywhere. Neither did the idea of an independent Bengal. The men with the power to decide did not want further fragmentation of the subcontinent, which Mountbatten and Nehru referred to as the "balkanization" of India.

DEMANDING A SIKH STATE

The ideas presented by Gurbachan Singh and Lal Singh Gyani—who in 1946 were teachers at the Sikh National College, Lahore, and the Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar, respectively—lived on in the agitation for a Punjabi state in the Indian Union and in the movement for Khalistan.

> This booklet is an attempt to present . . . the demand which the Sikh people have formulated for being given a State in their Homeland, the Punjab. This particular demand, which in its essence is quite old, [is] . . . put forth with full vigour by the Sikhs all over the Punjab and outside, and is at present the national political objective of the Sikh people. . . . The Sikhs have arrived at the objective of demanding a State for themselves after making trial of safeguards, communal settlements and various kinds of guarantees. With the best of intentions,

constitutional safeguards and guarantees cannot be sufficient to protect smaller peoples these days against powerful and organised majorities. . . . The pressure of majorities tells. The Sikhs are keenly alive, on the basis of the experience of the past, to the danger of living in a state of permanent dependence upon the rule of any majority—Hindu, Muslim or other. They have, therefore, made up their mind . . . to carve out a State . . . in which they can be independent, free from interference and suppression. . . .

Democracy as a political system is good within homogeneous societies, but where permanent and unalterable barriers exist, unadulterated democracy proves ruinous to small groups, which are placed permanently in a position of helplessness. For the minorities only one democratic safeguard is adequate, and that is that the majority agree to shed its character of majority and accept a position of parity with the minority. Unless such willingness is forthcoming on the part of the Muslims in the Punjab it is apparent that the Sikhs have no reason to feel secure. The only alternative to such an arrangement is the splitting up of the Punjab, and carving the Sikh State out of its present boundaries.

The Sikh demand is not based upon the spirit of aggressive communalism. It is the only effective scheme for survival which they can think of in these critical days of communal bitterness and imminent persecution and attempt at extermination or absorption. The Sikhs make an appeal to the conscience of the world to recognize their right of survival and to give them that self-determination which is the admitted right of nations all over the world. . . .

The Panth [community] notes . . . that in a situation so greatly charged with aggressive communalism, the minorities, and especially the Sikhs, find themselves placed in a position in which they cannot safeguard their national existence against the high-handedness of a politically organised communal majority, which conviction is further strengthened by the experience of the working of Provincial Autonomy for nine years, resulting in grave attacks being made on the cultural, civic and political rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab. . . .

In order to ensure the free and unfettered growth of the Sikh Panth, the Panth demands the splitting up of the existing province of the Punjab, with its unnatural boundaries, so as to constitute a separate autonomous Sikh State in those areas of the Central, Northern, Eastern and South-Eastern Punjab in which the overwhelming part of the Sikh population is concentrated, and which because of the proprietors in it being mostly Sikhs, and its general character being distinctly Sikh, is also the de facto Sikh Homeland—the area, extent, the status and constitutional frame-work of such a State being left to be settled by negotiation between the . . . representatives of the Sikh Panth and the other . . . parties, such as the British[,] . . . the Hindus and the Muslims. . . . The above demand is the unconditional, absolute and minimum demand . . . of the Sikh Panth. . . .

This feeling of the urgent need of a separate state has been growing upon the Sikhs now for close upon two decades. . . . The problem of any political future had not come before the people so clearly as it came when after survey of the Simon Commission [1928] it became evident that some kind of constitutional

changes were imminent. The Muslims began to clamour for a permanent, unalterable Muslim majority in the future legislature of the Punjab. In the event of this Muslim demand being accepted the Sikhs saw for themselves a very dark future, for they would never be able to make their voice effective in the administration of the province. . . . The Sikhs in this situation cast about for some way of safeguarding their national existence; and carving a new province out of the existing province of the Punjab was the solution . . . which they suggested in 1930 to Mahatma Gandhi, in 1931 to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, and in the same year, to Lord Willingdon, his successor. In placing this proposal for the solution of the Sikh problem, and incidentally, the communal problem of India, all parties among the Sikhs were united. . . . The same suggestion . . . was presented to the British Government at the 2nd Round Table Conference. . . .

The demand at that stage was, however, not for a separate Sikh State; it was for the splitting up of the Punjab, so as to alienate some Western Districts with an overwhelming Muslim majority from the province and to leave a smaller province, also more compact and homogeneous, from which the pressure of a permanent Muslim majority would be lifted. It was this demand which later on grew to be the well-known Azad Punjab Demand and has been put forward at present as the demand for an independent Sikh State.

The Sikh demand was nothing very novel or impracticable. It was fully in line with what both the British Government and the Congress had admitted in principle and later in practice in some parts. The Congress had already visualized the redistribution of the existing Indian provinces into 21, on the basis of language, while the British Government had on several occasions actually shifted the boundaries of provinces, as when Eastern Bengal and Assam were constituted into one province and the North-Western Frontier Province and Delhi were separated from the Punjab. . . . The Sikh demand, however, went unheeded and the Communal Award was given, which saddled a permanent unalterable Muslim majority on the Punjab. The strongest and bitterest opposition to this iniquitous piece of constitution-making came from the Sikhs, out of all the political groups in India. Then came Provincial Autonomy, as a result of which the Muslim-dominated Unionist Party was installed in the seat of Government in the Punjab. Under Provincial Autonomy the Sikhs suffered terrible hardships. Their religious and cultural rights were wantonly attacked, their proper share in the services was denied to them, and they were thwarted in every sphere of life. Their national language, Punjabi, was suppressed and discouraged; the administration of the Gurdwaras was sought to be interfered with, and Sikhs were persecuted by the emboldened Muslim fanatics in several parts of the Punjab. . . .

In 1940 came the Pakistan Resolution of the All-India Muslim League. This was only a symbol of the rising aggressive intentions of the Muslims, whose ambition to rule over and dominate others was now only too manifest. . . . The Congress sought to appease the Muslims at the cost of the Sikhs, and while taking exception to the Sikhs organizing themselves in self-defence, encouraged

and accommodated Muslim Communalism. The Sikhs at that time felt that national survival and an honourable existence for them were possible . . . only in a tract where they would not be at the mercy of a constitutional majority of any other group. In this situation emerged a further step in the old Sikh demand for splitting up of the Punjab, called the Azad Punjab Scheme. This scheme visualized the constituting of a new province, out of the Lahore, Jullundur, Ambala, and part of the Multan Divisions, in which area the Sikhs would be able to have an effective voice in the administration. In this area the Sikhs would hold the balance of power. This scheme was presented as the Sikh demand to Sir Stafford Cripps by the Sikh leaders in 1942, while rejecting the Pakistan demand. . . . The Shromani Akali Dal, the National political organization of the Sikhs, demanded the establishment of Azad Punjab by its Resolution dated the 7th June, 1943.

When the famous Gandhi–Raja[ji] Formula was floated, according to which the Muslim aspiration for Pakistan was to be accommodated, after separating the non-Muslim majority areas from the absolute Muslim majority areas, the Sikhs saw that according to this suggestion, the Sikhs would be divided into two—one part of them bottled up in Muslim Punjab and the other in Hindu India, both dominated by overwhelming non-Sikh majorities. Such a situation would put an end to the integrity of the Sikh nation for ever. . . . So the Panthic Gathering which assembled at Amritsar on the 20th August 1944 . . . made the demand for the establishment of the Azad Sikh State in the event of Pakistan being established. . . . The Sikh aspiration . . . has been to establish a democratic state, in which the liberal and socialistic Sikh basis of life should be made the basis of general civic life.

Since the meeting of the Panthic Gathering the demand for the establishment of the Azad Sikh State has come from Sikh Sangats all over India. It has caught also the younger generation. . . . The demand has found support from the Communist Party of India. The Communists have supported the Sikh claim to a separate autonomous area under the name Sikh Homelands, where they can develop unhindered culturally and politically, on progressive and democratic lines. . . .

The Sikhs find that while the Muslim is hostile to them with all the bitter memories of the Sikh–Muslim-struggles handed down from history, the Hindu Nationalism, especially its Punjab brand, has tried to disrupt the Sikhs, to break up their unity and to reabsorb them into Hinduism. Without political strength no minority can survive, especially in the present-day world of total organization and mobilization of peoples. The only way, therefore, in which the Sikhs can escape the fate of such almost extinct peoples as the Parsis, the Jews, the Jains and others is that they carve out for themselves a state in which they can make laws and be free from aggression. . . .

The Sikhs organized as "the Khalsa" acted as a distinct, separate nation in the days of the Misals [fighting bands] and under Ranjit Singh and after. The

Khalsa is the name conferred by Guru Gobind Singh upon a people knit together by faith in a common religious Scripture and religious preceptors, in a certain way of life, marked by the institution of the community kitchen or langar and a puritanical, military organization and having a supreme seat of authority and legislation in the Akal Takht at Amritsar. Guru Har Gobind, the Sixth Guru and Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru, who organized the Sikhs for fighting Moghal Imperialism, gave them all the qualities and attributes of a nation—all that makes a people active, alive and able to maintain a rigorous political character. . . . The Sikh people were at first theocratic in their political organization, submitting later to the monarchical dispensation, and now they are organizing their national life on a democratic basis like the other Indian nationalities. The Sikhs have all through history acted as a separate nation, with a distinct polity, outlook and political objective. . . .

So long as the Sikhs remained independent, they maintained in theory as well as in fact a distinct national political existence. They dominated the political scene in the Punjab, in the North-Western and South-Western parts of what is now known as the United Provinces, in Kashmere, in the Province of Peshawar and in other parts. They negotiated as a sovereign people with the Government of the East India Company in India and with . . . other Eastern countries.

When British rule came, the British Imperial Government set about the task of destroying and obliterating the vestiges of Sikh nationhood. The Sikh democratic way of life was suppressed, and the Gurdwaras, centres of the Sikh national life, were placed in the hands of hereditary priests, who tried as far as practicable, to dilute this Sikh feeling. . . . The Panth was no longer a living, vigorous nation, but a herd of unorganized people led by corrupt priests and hereditary aristocrats, selfish tools of British Imperialism.

The Sikh revival from this state of prostration dates from the great days of the Gurdwara Reform Movement,[32] which made the Sikhs aware after nearly three quarters of a century of atrophied national existence, of their great and splendid heritage of being the Khalsa, the Pure, the Elect, the band of Guru Gobind Singh, Lord of the Hawks. It aroused in the Sikhs the feeling that they were meant for a higher destiny than that which appeared to be marked out for them under the two-fold domination of the British rule and their own priestcraft. So they resumed in those critical days the entire consciousness, organization and paraphernalia of completely developed nationhood. . . . The Khalsa is essentially a political conception, a fusion of the people into a nation on the basis of religion—a conquest not political, but spiritual, through conversion to faith. . . .

The Hindus of the 19th century turned the defeat and misery of Sikhs to their own account. Hindu propaganda spread the view that the Sikhs were Hindus, and so great was the confusion of thought that so many Sikhs lost along with their feeling of nationhood, even the faith of their ancestors. Little was done at the time by the Sikh leaders to combat this evil. Later, in the 20th century, with