

Militancy and Media: A case study of Indian Punjab

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By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled MILITANCY AND MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF INDIAN PUNJAB has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. V. J. Varghese, Assistant Professor, Centre for South and Central Asian Studies, and administrative supervision of Prof. Paramjit Singh Ramana, Dean, School of Global Relations, Central University of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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ABSTRACT

Militancy and Media: A Case Study of Indian Punjab

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Militancy in Punjab has pushed the state to turmoil for more than one and a half decades. Though diverse aspects of this dark phase in the history of Punjab have been studied, the role and involvement of media has largely escaped academic scrutiny. The present study is an attempt to explore how the print media has been caught in conflicting discourses around militancy and thereby created a fractured public sphere. The Punjabi daily *Rojana Ajit*, the Hindi daily *Punjab Kesri* and *The Tribune*, an English daily, all popular in Punjab, has been selected for the purpose. The study also restricts itself to the period between May and July 1984, the time surrounding the infamous Operation Bluestar. The study looks at the communitarian leanings of the vernacular press in Punjab and how they construct categories according to the positions they subscribe to. It explore into the manner in which the murder of a prominent journalist has been representationally lost in its significance due to the media divergence. The study also argue that the set positions of the newspapers allowed them to report the news stories in their own way, and that the state and the nationalist rhetoric continue to wield considerable influence in deciding the character of the mediascape.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Sr. No.	Full Form	Abbreviation
1.	Anandpur Sahib Resolution	ASR
2.	Bhartiya Janta Party	BJP
3.	Border Security Force	BSF
4.	Central Reserve Police Force	CRPF
5.	Dharma Yudh Morcha	DUM
6.	Delhi Shiromani Gurdwara Committee	DSGC
7.	Hind Samachar Group	HSG
8.	Liberation Tiger of Tamil Elam	LTTE
9.	Muslim League	ML
10.	National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism	MIPT
11.	North West Frontier Province	NWFP
12.	Operation Blue Star	OBS
13.	Patiala and East Punjab States Union	PEPSU
14.	Punjabi Suba Movement	PSM
15.	Prevention of Terrorism Act	PTA
16.	Quit India Movement	QIM
17.	Shiromani Akali Dal	SAD
18.	Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee	SGPC
19.	South Asia Terrorism Portal	SATP

Chapter 1

Introduction

The postcolonial South Asia has been witnessing diverse forms of militancy directed against the state with varying magnitude and intensity. Many of these struggles, described variedly as terrorism, insurgency, freedom struggle, etc., have their colonial pedigree but acquired its militant forms arguably also due to the failure of postcolonial states to deliver. A few of them are outcomes of insecurities felt by the minority communities which has taken fanatic routes to turn into extremist politics of annihilation. The movement for a separate Sikh homeland in Punjab has been one of such movements which had its own genuine concerns and had its virtues but slipped into global terror modes soon (Nandy 1995). The people of Punjab were at the receiving end of the violence and counter violence by the state and the militants and vice versa. Like any other militant movements the Sikh separatist movement has deeply fissured the public sphere with endeavors to fashion and de-form public opinion.¹ The battles in the public sphere are reflections of a deeply divided body politic of a society, which often complicated the existing situation of tension and violence. The influence of the media in deciding the character of public sphere is well appreciated. The present study is a limited exploration into the role played and positions taken by print media in the militancy of Punjab.

The lingering tension and mutual suspicion between the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab entered into a violent phase as a radical group within the Sikh community took arms following incident of Nirankari-Sikh clash in 1978. The militancy that followed shook the state for more than one and a half decades causing enormous loss of human lives and property. Though it has been pointed out time and again that media has played an important role in the history of militancy in Punjab, it has by and large escaped any academic scrutiny. There are a number of research on diverse aspects of militancy in Punjab including the role of the army, the governmental failures and political compulsions, the causes and course of militancy and its socio-economic consequences, the media representations of militancy and

¹ Public sphere is "a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest" and is a peculiar character of bourgeoisie societies (Habermas 1989).

their considered role in creating an fractured public commonsense remains largely unexplored.

There is a surge in the studies on terrorism since the emergence of the so called “Islamic terrorism” and the 9/11 attack on the United States. However, the strands of global terror are diverse and driven by diverse ideologies whether it is the Shiaah-Sunni conflict in Pakistan, Liberation Tiger of Tamil Elam (LTTE) problem in Sri Lanka or Maoism in different parts of South Asia (Kumaraswamy and Copland 2009). South Asia has over time acquired the infamous reputation for harboring many of such movements which have serious social, economical and developmental consequences on the region and its people (Mohanty 2006). Works explaining the nature and causes of terrorism and militancy in general are not scanty (Crenshaw 2010).

Specific studies on the Punjab militancy too are many. It is seen as a problem in which diverse players were involved including the radical and moderate elements within the Sikh community, the state and the civil society (Tully and Jacob 1985). Different political parties in their attempt to advance their electoral interests and religious chairs which failed to control the situation leading to Hindu-Sikh distrust have been particularly criticized for their thoughtless belligerence (Cheema 2010). Religious nationalism has been held at the root of the issue and the condemnable mix up of politics with religion has been identified as a prime reason for Punjab militancy while searching for a democratic solution for the problem (Singh 1992a, Deol 2000). There are attempts to see the issue from the perspective of the Hindus who apparently placed themselves at the receiving end of religious hatred and minority insecurity alongside the involvement of Pakistan in the whole issue (Vedalankar 1984). The figure of Bhindranwala has been at the centre of a few other works while a few others did not see any foreign hand involved (Jafar 1987). The exaggeration of religious differences by vested interests in order to fuel the problem into an uncontainable fire has also been highlighted, apart from the violation of fundamental tenants of the religion as involved in the violent movement (Chopra, Mishra and Singh 1984, Aneja 1984). The specific role of the Akalis in the whole issue, its historical evolution, their changing positions and internal schisms also figured in a few studies (Singh 1988b). There are attempts see the issue in its

full extent- not just as a religious or community issue, but an issue with deeper political, social, economic and electoral roots and ramifications; governance failure and absence of tactful administration has been foregrounded by a few other studies (Singh 1994c, Leaf 1985, Kapur 1987d). The historical unfolding of the tension right from the colonial time and turning into a turbulence explosion in the 1980s has been the subject of a few other studies alongside the minority angle of the problem (Grover 1995, Singh 1985, Nayar and Singh 1984). The material reasons behind the tension including the economic reconfiguration brought by agrarian revolution have also been studied by a few others. The feeling of hurt and desire for a separate Sikh homeland among the global Sikhs and the support the idea of Khalistan generated among the Sikh diaspora has been subject matter of a few other studies, so also the connection between militancy and migration (Gupta 1992, Tatla 1999, Shani 2008, Chopra 2010, Bal 2005).

The relationship between media and terrorism has been a policy concern of late, leading to commissioning of studies in that direction.² Works with the help of newspapers are not completely absent. Deora used newspaper reports in an attempt to explain the governmental position on the whole issue, but employed the Delhi editions of a few English newspapers only and thereby giving a miss to the vernacular press (Deora 1992). A few other works like that of Dhillon while analyzing the root causes of the problem and the course it has taken pointed out 'media injustice' as one important dimension of the issue, though without much of an elaboration (Dhillon 1992). An exploration into the role of media in the whole movement and how it was at the centre of its unfolding is something which is not attempted.

The role of media in the construction and circulation of reality has been widely recognized these days. One of the major thrust areas of media studies, an area of growing academic interest in the contemporary world, is the politics of representation as played out and practiced in the media.³ The media has been

² Terrorism and the Media is a research study in 2008 financed by European Union Commission. www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/..WP4%Del%206.pdf [Accessed on 7 March, 2012]

³ Representation refers to the construction in any medium (especially the mass media) of aspects of 'reality' such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts. It

placed at the centre of the processes associated with what is referred to as the social construction of reality. This presupposes a change in perception regarding the very nature of reality – i.e. reality is not something out there, but something that is mediated and constructed. The modernist notions of reality with an objective independent existence has thus given way to a radical re-imagination of reality by recognizing its subjective “experience” with reality either via media coverage or via media dictation. The role of media now is such that it is difficult to distinguish between the real and the mediated. In such a theoretical framework, the media would play a major role in constructing realities in their own way to construe public opinion in the way in which they want, alongside catering to the demands of the constituency they are addressing.

The present study seeks to understand the embedded nature of media in the problem of militancy in Punjab and how they were part of a divided public in Punjab. The study remains to be exploratory in an attempt to foreground the potential of understanding the battle of representations in the public sphere, a battle went side by side with the actual battle of militancy. Media played a significant role not only in disseminating the information about the nature and activities of Khalistan militants and the state but also in characterizing the Khalistan movement for separate homeland. Since the electronic and visual media had not grown to the present stature, print media was particularly popular in Punjab during the 1980s. The newspapers like *Punjab Kesri*, *Jagbani*, *Jansatta*, *Akali Patrika*, *Rojana Ajit*, *Lok Lehar*, *Nawan Zamana* and *The Tribune* were the most popular ones among print media in Punjab. The study presumes that vernacular press was not neutral reporter of the happenings, but an active participant in the whole issue. The study consults the newspapers of just three months- May, June and July of 1984, one of the most crucial times in the history of militancy in Punjab. The period includes an interregnum of 11 days, from 4th June to 15th June, when the press was banned in Punjab in connection with the Operation Blue Star. These are the months immediately proceeding and following Operation Blue Star and assume tremendous importance as it would disentangle the manner in which print media conducted itself just before and after the military action. Three major newspapers are chosen for the

involves the production of meaning through language, discourse and image and occupies a central place in studies on culture (Hall 1997, Fulton and Harris 1991).

purpose- two vernacular newspapers and one English newspaper. The *Punjab Kesri* in Hindi, *Rojana Ajit* in Punjabi and *The Tribune* in English are these newspapers. All these newspapers were quite active in not only reporting the diverse aspects of militancy but also had taken their own considered positions on the issue. The *Punjab Kesri* was very popular among the urban Hindu middle class, though not to the same magnitude in rural areas. *Rojana Ajit* has most of its subscribers from the rural areas in the Sikh community, and a lesser urban base. *The Tribune* had most of its subscription base among the elite Hindu and Sikh community belonging to the urban areas and its popularity in the rural area was weak during the period under the study

The methodology adopted for the study is largely that of textual analysis with due importance to contextual reading. The editorials of the news papers are particularly used for unraveling the varied and contradictory positions taken by the newspapers under analysis on issues related to militancy. The editorials and news stories are read in their larger political context to foreground their meaning and significance. The study also makes use of secondary literature available on the subject to a considerable extent.

This dissertation has three chapters apart from this short introductory chapter and a concluding chapter. The second chapter would attempt to set the background for reading the newspapers, by giving a brief description about the history of militancy in Punjab with its causes and course of unfolding. The chapter also gives the history of vernacular press in Punjab with special reference to the communitarian character it acquired during the modernity in an attempt to embark on an informed reading of the media representations in the subsequent chapters. The third chapter by reading the newspaper editorials attempts to foreground the deployment of categories and appellations by the newspapers in their own ways and according to their requirements. The describing of people and groups are political and are done from considered positions. The chapter also contains a discussion on the differences of media representations around one murder during the militancy and how they construct their own realities around the same. The fourth chapter opens with a discussion on the considerable difference in media stories around a single incident- breaking up of Bhakra canal allegedly by the militants. It then proceeds to

a discussion on editorials and articles published by the newspapers under the study after Operation Blue Star in an attempt to highlight the nationalist rhetoric, call for harmony and silences of domestication they richly carry. The last chapter summarizes the study by way of concluding it.

Chapter-2

Community, Militancy and Vernacular Press

The militancy in Punjab has a long historical evolution, there are attempts to trace its seeds from the divide and rule policy of the British and in context of under those communal reservations and two nation theories, the Sikhs also felt that they are separate from the rest particularly due to their vulnerability as a minority (Jain 1995, Singh 1965). The activities of Arya *Samaj* in Punjab and the radical positions taken by Dayanada Saraswati on the infallibility of Vedas and his attempt to belittle Sikhism kindled tensions between Hindus and Sikhs. The Sikhs began to assert their separate identity and sections within the community got into a mission of freeing Sikhism from Hindu influence (Jones 1973, Barrier 1968). The advocates of separate Sikh identity particularly organizations like Chief Khalsa Diwan, campaigned to purge Sikhism from Brahminical influence and removing Hindu gods and goddess from the Golden Temple.⁴

The fear of absorption into the larger Hindu religion and nation also made a section of Sikhs to demand for a separate nation, like Pakistan for Muslims, as they want to live neither with India nor with Pakistan (Jain 1995: 130) It is also pointed out that the British policy was favoring the separatist thoughts among Sikhs as reflected in enactment of a separate Anand Marriage Act in 1909, which made them to pursue their Khalsa identity as different from the Hindus (Ibid). The British also supported separate electorates for Sikh in the electoral reforms of 1909.⁵ In the wake of the announcement of the Muslim League (ML) at Lahore in 1940 that the Muslims of British India forms a separate nation, the radical Sikhs also tried to convey the same message to the British that they also deserve a free nation. The Akali Dal soon raised the slogan 'Azad Punjab' and a delegation of Sikh leaders including Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh, Joginder Singh and Master Tara Singh met Sir Stafford Cripps to present the Sikh point of view prior to the partition of India and pleaded that Sikhs would feel unsafe in either united India or Pakistan (Jain 1995: 133-34).

⁴ They were successful in getting the idols removed in 1905 (Jain 1995: 130)

⁵ The Lieutenant Governor supported the case of the Sikhs and wrote to the Viceroy that "in Punjab, the Sikh community is of greatest importance and should be considered- to ensure its adequate representations." (Jain 1995: 130)

The Akalis demanded the creation of a separate Sikh state encompassing Sikhs majority areas and their important holy shrines (Ibid). Just before the arrival of cabinet mission, the Akali Dal passed a formal resolution demanding Sikhistan, as they felt that “the entity of Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of Pakistan by the Muslims” (Ibid). The partition has worsened the situation with more than 20 million people shifted from both sides, during which the Hindus and Sikhs “together faced the communal holocaust” (Singh 2007). The formation of Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) in 1948 by merging Sikh princely states along with Malerkotla and Nalagarh resulted in a Sikh majority political entity and redressed the Sikhs anxieties to a certain extent (Jain 1995: 135). This was in response to the demands of the Akalis in the backdrop of demands for Pakistan and the Congress assurance that the interests of the Sikhs would be safeguarded (Wallace and Chopra 1988: 121).

However the relationship between Akalis⁶ and the Congress began to sour which was reflected in the resignation of Master Tara Singh from the Congress and difference of opinion over the State Reorganization Committee (SRC) of 1953 (Wallace and Chopra 1988: 121, Jain 1995: 136). The denial of Punjab *Suba* by the Congress party too infuriated the Akalis (Jain 1995). The Akali leader Master Tara Singh saw this as an attack on the Sikhs and felt that the Congress has not been recognizing the services of Sikhs to the nation (Ibid). It is pointed out that the Akali demand for Punjab *Suba* for the sake of Sikhs and not for the Punjabis was one reason why the campaign became unsuccessful (Ibid).

Apparently the insistence on Punjabi to be written only in Gurmukhi script engendered anxieties among the non-Gurmukhi knowing Hindus alongside the idea of creating Punjab as a Sikh dominance state (Madhok 1985: 79). As the Akalis moderated their demand and as the Sikh soldiers brace services to the country in the wars against China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965 respectively, made the central government to concede the demand for Punjab *Suba*, which was done in

⁶ In the context of Sikhism, Akali “pertaining to Akal or the supreme power” may refer to: any member of the Khalsa, i.e the collective body of baptized Sikhs, a member of the Akali movement (1919-1925), a politician of the Akali Dal (formed in Dec 1920 as a task force for the SGPC) later on become political party and a term for Nihang too.

1966 along with the formation of Himachal Pradesh and Haryana (Ibid: 138). However, the electoral performance of the Akali Dal continues to be poor and they wanted issues to mobilize public towards them.⁷ Akali got only 1 seat out of 13 Lok Sabha seats in the 1971 elections and 24 seats out of 117 to the state assembly in 1972.⁸ Prominent Columnist M.J Akbar observed that “one of the important causes of crisis in the 1980’s was that the people would not allow the Akalis to win and the Akalis would not allow themselves to lose.”⁹

The Akali Dal meeting at Anandpur Sahib in October 1973 passed the ‘Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR) 1973’, which demanded more autonomy for Punjab among other things.¹⁰ The demand of the resolution were comprehensive and far reaching_“-state autonomy, Chandigarh as capital of Punjab, merger of Punjabi speaking areas into Punjab, water control to Punjab state, increase proportion of Sikhs into the army, labor reforms, adoption of Punjabi as second language in northern states, protection of Sikh migrants in Jammu & Kashmir, proper representation to the Sikhs in other states, abolishing the excise duty on tractors, improve the status of the labor class, establishment of broadcasting station at golden temple, amendment in the Hindu succession Act for the future of the married girl and exemption of the farmers from the wealth and estate tax, creation of a budget for the SC and non-SC categories for their welfare and final one was ending the discrimination on the distribution of the Ravi-Beas waters and open the sugar and textile industry in Punjab.”¹¹ The Resolution is also read as Shiromani Akalis Dal’s keeness for having a Sikh nation (Jain 1995: 147).

⁷ Since independence, Punjab has been ruled both by the Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). “Out of the 30 governments, Congress hold Chief Minister position more than other’s that is 14 times, SAD got Chief Minister ship for 8 times (including the present Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal from 1 March, 2007). The state was under President’s Rule for 8 times (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Chief_Ministers_of_Punjab_India) [Accessed date- 26 May, 2012]

⁸(Reference of electoral record of Assembly elections 1972- (eci.nic.in/eci...1972/Statistics%20Report%20Punjab%201972.pdf) and for 5th Lok Sabha elections 1971- (eci.nic.in/eci_main1/Elections_Statistics.aspx) [Accessed date- 26 May, 2012]

⁹ Cited from (Jain 1995: 140)

¹⁰ The resolution moved by the SGPC President S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra and endorsed by the then Chief Minister S. Parkash Singh Badal

¹¹ <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/sikhism21.asr> access on 10 January 2012

State move towards Militancy

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime is considered to be the golden age of Punjab also because of the communal amity prevailed under his rule. The early Sikh gurus also considered everyone as the children of Almighty, irrespective of religious differences (Singh, 2007: 84a). However, the unfriendly attitude of the Mughals made the later gurus to take arms to protect their faith and religion. There are people who view the Khalistan movement as consequence of a militarized form of religion and on the course of the movement more than 11, 694 people lost their lives (Gill 1997).

The idea of Khalistan has religious connotations as it indicates the rule of Khalsa. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala emerged as the leader of radical elements within the Sikh community in pursuance of this demand. It is pointed out that "there was very little learning or piety to this man. He had a certain amount of following among illiterate peasants but was unknown outside the districts of central Punjab till his men clashed with the Nirankaries on 13 April 1978 in Amritsar. Thereafter he emerged as the champion of orthodoxy" (Nayar and Singh 1984: 13).

Bhindranwala had been appointed as a head of Damdami Taksal in August 1977, where he was preaching Shri Guru Granth Sahib to Sikh students. It was at that time he started Amrit Parchar program to baptize Sikh children. The clash with the Nirankaries on 13th April 1978 and the killing of 13 Sikhs became a strong arm in the hand of radical elements to push their ideology.¹² The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) was made to issue a 'Hukamnama' from Akal Takht declaring Nirankaries as the enemies of the Sikhs and calling severing all relations with them. The Hukamnama was followed by a series of incidents which

¹² The Nirankaries decided to hold their convention in Amritsar on April 13, the birth of Khalsa...it was alleged that the place, date and time of convention were deliberately chosen by the Nirankaries in connivance with the congress, which had been out of power and was trying to embarrass the Akali-Janta alliance. One day before the convention, on April 12, the Nirankaries took out a procession, during the course of which their chief allegedly made some derogatory remarks against the Sikh religion...Next day some followers of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and those of the *Akhand Kirtni Jatha*, went totally unarmed to the venue of Nirankari congregation to dissuade the Nirankari Chief from denigrating Sikh religion and Gurus. The Nirankaries, who were well equipped with rifles and sten guns fired at the approaching Sikhs, resulting the death of thirteen of them...Meanwhile, the 62 Nirankaries, including the head of the sect, Baba Gurbachan Singh, charged in connection with the killing of 13 Sikhs in clash of 1979 had faced trial and were acquitted on the grounds that they had acted in self defence (Gill 1997).

pushed Punjab into full militancy (Kapur 1986: 237). In frustration to the court verdict some angry Sikhs killed the head of Nirankaries' Baba Gurbachan Singh in Delhi. This was followed by violent incidents including the hoisting of Khalistan flag at Anandpur Sahib in March 1981, Akali tightening of their positions for separate Sikh nation, killing of DIG of Jalandher in April 1983, the occupation of golden temple by militants, Operation Blue Star in June 1984 killing of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in October 1984 and the eventual suppression of militancy by the state.¹³ The Operation Blue Star has left permanent hurt on the Sikh community though most of them did not support Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala. Bhindrawala has been considered by many as a creation of the Congress in order to weaken Akali Dal and make electoral gains (Wallace and Chopra 1988: 419).

In the attempt to flush out the heavily armed militants from the Golden Temple the holiest shrine built for all communities by the gurus became a site of bloodshed. In the course of military action, hundreds of militants died apart from a number of devotees and Akal Takht was badly damaged in the firing with the help of tanks and machine guns. This later led to the murder of Indira Gandhi which kindled anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in which hundreds of Sikhs lost their life and property (Singh 1992a).

After the death of Bhindranwale, the militants organized themselves under the umbrella of Panthic Committee and continued their activities. They prescribed

¹³ The important incidents in this regard can be summarized as follows.

20th March, 1981- Flag of new Republic of Khalistan hoisted at Anandpur Sahib.

9 September, 1981 - Head of Hind Samachar Group (HSG) Lala Jagat Narain assassinated by militants.

13th April, 1982 - Akali Dal organized world Sikh Conference to stress, Sikhs are separate Nation.

24th April, 1982 - Akali Dal launches Nahar Roko Agitation. Desecration of Gurdwaras and temples follows.

4th August, 1982 - Nahar Roko SAD launches Dharma Yudh Morcha (DUM).

4th April, 1983 - Rasta Roko agitation organized by Akali Dal

25th April 1983 - DIG Jalandher A.S Atwal shot dead at the Golden Temple entrance

June-July 1983 - Number of banks and armories looted

6th October 1983 - President Rule applied in Punjab

14th February 1984 - Hindu Suraksha Smiti organized Bandh in city, was marked by violence.

27th February 1984 - Pages of article 25 burnt by Akali Dal.

13th March 1984 - Attempt on the life of Chief Minister Darbara Singh.

28th March 1984 - President of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) Harbans S. Manchanda shot dead.

April- May 1984 - Killings continue in the state.

2nd May 1984 - Longowal launches non-cooperation movement.

3-6th June 1984 – Operation Bluestar

31st October 1984- Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assassinated in New Delhi by her Sikh bodyguards and the anti-Sikh riots began in Delhi (Singh, 1992: 1b).

codes of conduct for different sections of people, violation of which invited punishments from the militants.

At the individual level, six following kinds of person were told to mend their behavior: amritdhari (baptized) Sikh using intoxicants, those who sell and distil liquor, butchers who kill and sell animals, those who run liquor shops and also the ragis, dhadis, preachers, granthis and government employees who drink liquor during duty hour, those who sell tobacco, bidis, cigarettes and opium in the villages and cities, and the government employees who take bribes. There were two important aspects of the code of conduct as formulated by the militants itself. The first included those who were informing the police about the activities and hideouts of militants, where as those anti social elements, which sent forged letters and looted Sikh families, comprised the second category: At the social level the following rules were formulated: Do not give and take dowry and Singh vulgar songs during marriages, and the size of 'barat' (marriage party) must not be more than 11 persons. At the religious level the following three rules were stated: do not trim hair and beard, do not sit in front of Guru Granth Sahib under the influence of liquor, do not go to Radhaswami and Sant Dhesianwale and sorcerers etc. Finally, at the level of formal institutions all heads of the school were told to introduce uniforms as specified by the militants (Judge 2004, Sekhon 1999).

This had resulted in a situation in which militants lost the sympathies from the Sikhs Following Operation Blue Star and moral policing and draconian punishments by taking laws in their hands began to resent.¹⁴ The militancy has been a big setback for the entire state - hundreds of people belonging to Sikh and Hindu religion lost their life and the development of the state has taken a back seat. It is stated that between 1981 and 1997, there were total 8773 murder and shoot out cases recorded by the police; 3124 cases of robberies and 702 cases of sedition. As much as 7942 illegal arms has been recovered by the police from different militant groups; vast power has been given to the police, there were a total of 5782 police

¹⁴ The Punjabi newspaper *Rojana Ajit* from the year 1988 to 1991 provided large numbers of statements about the killing of persons who according to them did not follow the code given by the militants (Judge 2004: 3953).

encounters recorded.¹⁵ The militant movement enjoyed considerable support from the Punjabi diaspora who felt deeply hurt at the incident of 1984 (Tatla 1998). The militancy also contributed to heightened amount of out-migration from the state particularly to the western countries through the channel of political asylum and others (Chopra 2010). The movement lost their currency by mid 1990's mainly due to two major reasons- distancing of Jat Sikh community from militancy movement due to the 'misdeeds' of the militants and the second the very severe statist repression under the Jat Sikh DGP of Punjab, KPS Gill (Singh 2001: 3829).

Situating Militancy

The present work is not going into a discussion on the diverse aspects of militancy in Punjab, but limits itself to its media representations and covers a very short period. The concepts of militancy and terrorism have been used, sometimes interchangeably too, by different people to describe the Punjab situation at that point in time. Terrorism is a relative concept and would acquire different meaning depending up on the optic through which it is looked at. The notion of terror is arguably ancient but the birth of the terror as conceptual category is modern and its evolution as a political concept start with the 18th century French revolution. British statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke used the word to describe the regime 'De La Terreur' commonly known in English as the 'Reign of Terror' [June 1793 to 1794] (Crenshaw 2011). Terrorism is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible," said Jacobin leader Maximelen Robespierre. In 1795, Edmund Burke denounced the Jacobins for letting "thousands of those hell-hounds called terrorists." Terror in that sense right from the beginning is seen as a measure to achieve justice on the one hand and a severe measure of injustice on the other (Griffith 2004: 10).

The definitions to terrorism also vary accordingly. Waciorski mention definition of terrorism proposed by the League of Nations convention for the prevention and the repression of terrorism adopted in 1937:

¹⁵ South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), Terrorism activities in Punjab The crime rate remains the highest during the period from 1983 to 1993. www.satp.org>India datasheet>Punjab>Annual casualties in terrorist related violence 1981-2012. The given figure is a submission of the incidents during the time in related paragraph. [Accessed on 12 April 2012]

Acts of terrorism are criminal acts directed against a state and which aim, or are of a nature to provoke terror. In conclusion Waciorski proposes a different definition: "Terrorism is a method of action by which an agent tends to produce terror in order to impose his domination" (Rapoport 2006: 70-71).

In another definition given by Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) to terrorism see it as "a Collection of individual belonging to an autonomous non state or sub national revolutionary or anti-governmental movement who are dedicated to the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Such an entity is seen as having at least some structural and command and control apparatus that, no matter how loose or flexible, nonetheless provides an overall organizational framework and general strategic direction."¹⁶ Walter Scott analyzed 'Regimes of Terror' as governmental and non-governmental and it involves (a) an act of violence, which (b) causes an emotional reaction and (c) creates social effects.¹⁷ State terrorism and other forms of terrorisms in this analysis are looked upon as two sides of the same coin.

Militancy on the other hand has got rather a general meaning in the first instance - the state or condition of being combative or disposed to fight. It is seen as a measure to downplay the democratic system of the state and is a result of alienation from the public and let particularly the youth (Singh 1994c) George Haughton in his article 'Matter of Militancy' explains "it springs from one's values, is expressed as an attitude, and result in certain behavior. One's value is those things in which one strongly believes. They are what one believes to be fundamentally important and true. From this comes an attitude which is unwilling to tolerate any divergence from this fundamentally important truth and which seeks to defend them. It results in behaviors which speaks up when these truths are attacked or dilute and which refuse to cooperate with any activity which would minimize their importance" (Mohanty 2006: 53). According to the dictionary definition, militant is;

¹⁶ www.e-cademic.de/data/books/extracts/9783892049210.pdf [Accessed on 1 June, 2012]

¹⁷ www.palgrave-journals.com/cpt/journal/v8/n2/full/cpt2837a.html [Accessed on 25 May, 2012]

having a combative character, aggressive, especially in the service of a cause; may be engaged in warfare and violent activities.¹⁸

Militancy in that sense is a state of things in which groups are combating each other or against the state in pursuance of a cause in which they believe. It is an outcome of a closure of groups/people involved towards other forms of negotiations and resorting to settlement through armed conflicts and killings to set messages to the public and the state. Terrorism on the other hand can be attributed to governments as well as to private groups and entities as they choose atrocious paths to achieve their set goals. Though out the present study, the situation in Punjab is referred to as militancy in an attempt to locate from an ideologically neutral position.

Modernity and the Press

Media is known as fourth pillar of democracy after Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. It acts as a watchdog of democracy and plays a pivotal role in putting things in place whenever the democratic rights of a person or a group is threatened or denied. The freedom of press in such a situation is a crucial imperative for any successful democracy. Since it can play a crucial role in the making of public opinion, the media has gone so powerful influencing the everyday life of the nation and its politics. It is well known that the advent of press in India is closely related with its history of colonial modernity (Dube 2002, Pandian 2002, Chatterjee 1997). The dream run of media in the country started from the 18th century when most of the people were not literates, whether in English, Hindi or vernacular language. It was in the 1780s after the advent of printing press into India the press started rolling in the country. It was on 29th January 1780 *Bengal Gazette* an English Weekly, published by James Augustus, appeared from Calcutta and it was the first newspaper in South Asia. The modernization process in the country engendered the vernacular press, which in turn improved the literacy levels in vernacular languages alongside spreading modern ideas and thinking among the people through a process of cultural translation (Menon 2007). It was at the centre of the social reform movements all across the country. It played a pivotal role in perpetuating nationalist ideas among the Indians and thus contributed significantly

¹⁸ www.freedictionary.com/militant. [Accessed on 12 February, 2012]

to India's struggle for freedom from British colonialism (Seal 1971, Hofmeyr et.al 2011).

The journey of vernacular press is not older than 125 years in the Indian subcontinent and it witnessed of many changes at political and regional levels from its inception in the late 19th century. Indian modernity was special as it represented a peculiar blend of tradition and modernity in the making of what is called as 'our modernity' (Chatterjee 1997). The rise of middle class in India as an outcome of the modernization process, among other things, contributed to growing demand for English and Indian languages newspapers (Joshi 2005, 2010, Neyazi 2010). The Indian modernity is also inseparable from the making of communitarian identities; it not only constituted communities but also impelled them against each other (Devika and Varghese 2011, Vander Meer 1994). The vernacular press also in significant ways began to be organized on communitarian lines. Punjab was not an exception either (Deol 2000).

Vernacular Press in the 1920's

Vernacular means "the language of a particular group, profession, region or country especially as spoken rather the formally written."¹⁹ Definition of Oxford online dictionary elaborates that vernacular is language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people of a country or region or the terminology used by people belonging to a specified group or engaging in a specialized activity or spoken as a one's mother tongue; not learned or imposed as a second language."²⁰ Vernacular press in that sense would mean press in specific vernacular language and pertains to vernacular setting and culture.

Making its beginning in the late 19th century, the vernacular press in Punjab became a strong force to be reckoned with in the early half of the 20th century. While the British were busy in English language newspapers and Indians were making strong efforts to make journalism activities particularly in vernacular language as English largely remained outside the reach of Indians except a

¹⁹ www.Grammer.about.com [Accessed on 15 February 2012]

²⁰ www.freedictionaries.com/militant [Accessed on 8 March 2012]

microscopic minority. It was also a time of burgeoning tensions between communities and faiths. It was a time when the tension between Hindus and Sikhs were coming strongly into the foreground. Sikhs were seeing themselves a different religion but segments of Hindus were not in agreement with this. The history of it goes back to the 16th century Guru Amar Das (1569-1574) when Sikhs dissociated themselves from Hinduism and began to replace Sanskrit hymns with Guru's hymns. During the time of Guru Gobind Singh, it become Panth and followed a new name Singh meaning lion (Uprety 1980: 10).

The gurdwara movement that started in 1920's and continued to 1925 got gurdwaras free from Mahants. Under the leadership of Akali Dal, the Sikh fought the war for gurdwaras against Mahants (Sahota 1993). The Arya Samaj movement has taken roots in parallel in Punjab. Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1878 came with a book *Satyarth Parkash*, which is considered to be the bible of Arya Samaj, allegedly considered the Vedas of Sanskrit much richer than the Holy Shri Granth Sahib. This apparently made Sikh annoyed and they demanded banning the book in Punjab to counter Arya Samaj. Sikh established Guru Singh Sabha to propagate Sikhism in Punjab asserting their separate identity (Uprety 1980: 13). Politically too the Sikhs felt that they have been marginalized in relations to other minorities particularly in the reform of 1909 and in the Lucknow pact of 1916 (Ibid: 15-16). These tensions were responsible for the development of a significant share of vernacular press on communication lines in Punjab.

Total number of newspapers and magazines published in Punjab rose from 328 in 1923 to 390 in 1925 and then shot up to 661 in 1929. As the communitarian identities get solidified "each community in Punjab armed itself with dailies, weeklies, bi-weeklies and fortnightlies, monthlies and annual numbers to propagate their own view and to attack on each other" (Ibid 95-96). Prem Raman Uprety in his book *Religion and Politics in Punjab in the 1920's* gives a detailed statistics on the communitarian background of vernacular publication from Punjab in the 1920's. The following tables taken from the book makes it clear. When Hindus and Muslims owned 121 and 117 vernacular publications, Sikhs has 39 under their ownership. Between 1923 and 1929 when the publication of Hindus have gone up to 207 from

121 and that of Muslims declined from 117 to 101. In the case of Sikhs it has gone up to 55 from 39.

Table -2.1

**Ownership of publication and circulation
Community wise for the Year 1923**

<u>Hindus</u>	No.	Approx. Circulation
Dailies	12	200-5000
Weeklies	34	100-10,500
Bi-weeklies	05	500-2000
Tri-weeklies	00	-
Fortnightlies	12	720-11,100
Monthlies	55	150-11,100
Quarterlies	02	720-11,100
Annuals	01	700
Total	121*	
<u>Muslim</u>		
Dailies	06	300-5000
Weeklies	33	250-2000
Bi-weeklies	01	400
Tri-weeklies	01	700
Fortnightlies	14	100-1800
Monthlies	60	100-5000
Quarterlies	02	250-1000
Annuals	00	-
Total	117	
<u>Sikh</u>		
Dailies	06	1000-5000
Weeklies	12	300-3000
Bi-weeklies	02	500-850
Tri-weeklies	03	250-1000
Fortnightlies	02	175-1000
Monthlies	12	165-1000
Quarterlies	00	-
Annuals	00	-
Total	39	

Source- Uprety, Prem Raman, *Religion and Politics in Punjab in the 1920's*. Delhi: Sterling Publ. 1980

Table -2.2**Ownership of publication and circulation
Community wise for the Year 1925**

Hindus	No.	Approx. Circulation*
Dailies	11	60- 4850
Weeklies	42	250- 2400
Bi-weeklies	04	400- 600
Tri-weeklies	00	-
Fortnightlies	05	500- 1000
Monthlies	70	100 - 9580
Quarterlies	03	1000- 1200
Annuals	00	-
Total	135	
Muslim		
Dailies	04	650-3500
Weeklies	36	70-2400
Bi-weeklies	04	150-1400
Tri-weeklies	01	1800
Fortnightlies	06	260-1580
Monthlies	66	60-4200
Quarterlies	02	100-400
Annuals	00	-
Total	109	
Sikh		
Dailies	06	600-2500
Weeklies	15	200-3000
Bi-weeklies	05	350-1000
Tri-weeklies	01	800
Fortnightlies	01	500
Monthlies	16	100-2000
Tri Monthlies	03	500-800
Quarterlies	00	-
Annuals	00	-
Total	47	

Source- Uprety, Prem Raman. *Religion and politics in Punjab in the 1920's*. New Delhi: Sterling Publ., 1980

Table -2.3

**Ownership of publication and circulation
Community wise for the Year 1929**

<u>Hindus</u>	No.	Approx. Circulation
Dailies	17	500-10, 000
Weeklies	91	200-9000
Bi-weeklies	02	500-1000
Tri-weeklies	01	500
Fortnightlies	09	100-1000
Monthlies	77	100-9950
Quarterlies	10	100-1500
Annuals	00	-
Total	207	
<u>Muslim</u>		
Dailies	06	1000-5000
Weeklies	60	100-80000
Bi-weeklies	04	40860-3800
Tri-weeklies	00	700
Fortnightlies	10	250-2000
Monthlies	16	50-10, 100
Quarterlies	05	350-5000
Annuals	00	-
Total	101	
<u>Sikh</u>		
Dailies	03	500-10,000
Weeklies	31	300-1750
Bi-weeklies	00	500-850
Tri-weeklies	00	250-1000
Fortnightlies	04	-
Monthlies	25	500-1000
Tri monthlies	02	500-800
Quarterly	00	-
Annuals	00	-
Total	55	

Source- Uprety, Prem Raman. *Religion and politics in Punjab in the 1920's*. New Delhi: Sterling Publ., 1980.

The comparison makes it clear that Hindus were more into media and arguably used journalistic tool very effectively than other communities. In just two years they reached up to the mark of 135 from 121 numbers of dailies and annuals including other issues. In 1923 they were publishing 12 dailies and in 1929 it reached 17. In the case of Sikhs it declined from 6 to 3 during the same time. In 1923, Sikhs were publishing 6 dailies with 1000-5000 readership; in 1925 the numbers remain the

same with lesser circulation of 600-5000 and in 1929 they have went down with just 3 dailies in market but increased their circulation of 500-10,000 (Uprety 1980: 96-97). However, the data also indicates how powerful was the media with an absorbing of number of publications in Punjab even as early as 1920's.²¹

Vernacular Press since Independence

The Indian independence was coincided by partition, bloodshed and unaccountable amount of human suffering. With the emergence of Pakistan as a separate nation, hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who have lived in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) abandoned their homes and fled towards India for protection and life (Singh 2007b: 9) It is said that by the summer of 1947, when the creation of new state Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people - Muslims and Hindu and Sikhs were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all the northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. In the history of India, this was known as the one of the biggest crucial and dramatic transfer of population (Ibid: 10). In the new context of communal tension, the Sikhs, being a minority in the Indian nation, as indicated already, had their own anxieties about their place and future.

The conditions that led to the making of such anxieties had a slightly longer historical evolution than partition. It was in 1928, under the chairmanship of its leader Moti Lal Nehru the Congress formed a committee to work on design for the constitution of free India. In its report, the committee upheld the principle of communal reservation for the Muslims, but overlooked other minorities including the Sikhs. Responding to the apprehensions raised by the Sikh leaders the Congress party in its annual session at Lahore, in 1929, passed a resolution according to which "no future constitution would be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full satisfaction to the Sikhs" (Dhillon 1992: 6). It is also important to note that in 1946 itself, some of the extremists among the Sikhs raised voices for a separate Khalistan after the successful demand of Pakistan by the Muslims League (Kapur

²¹ In above paragraph, Punjab is taken as Maha Punjab before partition of India.

1985: 119). After the birth of Indian Union the Sikh disillusionment got concretely reflected first in the Punjabi *Suba* movement under the leadership of Akali Dal.²²

The Akali Dal had to launch series of *morchas* for the formation of Punjabi speaking state in 1955, 1960, 1962 and 1965 (Sahota 1993: 22-23). The vernacular press began to play a crucial role in the Punjab politics particularly from the Punjabi *Suba* agitation onwards. It became a party in the subsequent phase of militancy in Punjab from the late 1970s onwards which was rolled into a violence phase with a clash between Sikhs and Nirankaries occurred in Amritsar. The vernacular press became an important channel through conflicting positions on militancy began to get currency and there had been no area of life in Punjab which is unaffected by such a media positioning. The subsequent discussion in this regard would focus only on the three newspapers that are coming under the present study - The Hindi daily *Punjab Kesri*, the Punjabi daily *Rojana Ajit* and English daily *The Tribune*.

Punjab Kesri- Hind Samachar Group

Punjab Kesri, owned by the Hind Samachar Group (HSG) is one of the largest Hindi newspapers in Punjab. It emerged as a major player in the 60's when Punjab was going through a big change. The precursor of *Punjab Kesri* was an Urdu daily namely Hind Samachar which was established in 1948, an year after independence in Punjab.²³ The newspaper was founded by Lala Jagat Narayan who was also its founder editor. He was a staunch Congressman and apart from participating in India's struggle for independence, he was also active in the Arya Samaj Movement (Deol 2000: 153). When it began rolling in 1965, *Punjab Kesri* was having an initial circulation of 1500 copies. By 1975, the circulation has risen to

²² Punjabi *Suba* Movement: After 1947, there was a temporary thaw in the communitarian politics of the Akalis. The Akalis joined hand with the Congress to form the first government in East Punjab. At this stage, the Akali Dal took a clear stand that it was opposed to communal electorate. But after a few years later, in the mid-fifties, the Akali Dal raised the demand for the linguistic reorganization of the Punjab. In their memorandum submitted to the States Reorganization Commission (SRC), for instance, they had proposed that the 'Punjabi Suba' should comprise Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ferozpur, Ludhiana, Jalandher, Hoshiarpur, Ambala, Karnal, Sirsa, Bathinda, Kapurthala, Fathegarh Sahib and Sangrur (leaving out Jind, and Nirwana tehsils) of the Punjab and the Ganganagar district of Rajasthan with a population of nearly 1.20 crore.(Chopra, Mishra & Singh: 101-102)

²³ From 1950 to 1965 it was the time when students of government schools in Punjab were taught Hindi as Devanagari script. Urdu seen as a language of Pakistan so that parents supported Hindi language. This made Jagat Narayan to think in terms of launching a Hindi newspaper in Punjab (Robin Jeffrey 1997: 79).

nearly 1 Lakh copies per day. The circulation of the Hindi national daily had grown further to 12, 500 times in just 16 years as the circulation touched 2 lakh by 1975 (Deol 2000, Jeffery 1997).²⁴ The *Punjab Kesri* a little later with an average circulation of 3.42 Lakhs per day was second to Anand Bazar Patrika which was having a daily circulation of 4.12 lakh. In 1983, *Punjab Kesri* began publishing from New Delhi and by 1986 had become unquestionably largest Hindi selling daily in India (Jeffery 1997:79). According to 1991 Readership Survey Report operated by Operation Research Group (ORG), *Punjab Kesri* is the largest newspaper in North India with a readership of 48.39 Lac and with a total of 10.30 percent of the readership of all the newspapers (Deol 2000:153) and today the overall circulation of newspaper is near about 8 lakh with more than 10 editions.

Punjab Kesri had a tough time during the militancy in Punjab as they remained one of the prime targets of the extremists. Lala Jagat Narayan (1889-1981), the founder of *Punjab Kesri* was gunned down in September 1981 during the Khalistan insurgency. The reason for his murder was the perceived insult that he and his newspaper perpetuated on the sentiments of Sikhs by speaking out against a separate Khalistan. Subsequently, his son and editor of HSG Ramesh Chander was killed by the supporters of Khalistan on 12 May 1984. In June 1989, Khalistan supporting militants targeted *Punjab Kesri* agents and hawkers and killed 53 people in four years. After these incidents, Hind Samachar Group established Martyr Fund and raised Rs 42 million (US\$1.2 million) from readers as contributions to the bereaved families. Such support demonstrated the way in which the newspaper had borrowed into the daily lives of its readers (Kaminski 2011: 508-09).

Rojana Ajit: The Ajit Group

The second newspaper under the present study, *Rojana Ajit* belongs to the Ajit Group. This newspaper is in *Gurumukhi* and is the largest selling Punjabi newspaper in Punjab. It began its publication of newspaper in 1944 and until 1957 it was published in Urdu. *Rojana Ajit* in Punjabi was launched in 1955. Dr. Sadhu

²⁴ During the emergency of 1975-1977 when the government of Indira Gandhi (1917-1984: Prime Minister 1966-1977, 1980-1984) imposed heavy censorship over the press, *Punjab Kesri* started to encompassing its first page into magazine. *Punjab Kesri* thus has the distinction of being first newspaper in country who publishes its first page into color (Kaminski 2011 : 508-09)

Singh Hamdard was its founder publisher and editor. He worked for the SGPC and was active in Quit India Movement (QIM) against the British. He was succeeded by his son Barjinder Singh Hamdard as the editor (Deol 2000: 154).

Two main reasons are attributed to the establishment for the *Rojana Ajit*, first the newspaper in Punjab was targeting the English speaking Punjabi population, who belonged to upper level of the society; second the aim of the newspaper to cater to the needs of the emerging affluent Punjab peasantry, partly as consequences of the green revolution. The growth of a newspaper in Gurmukhi has implications for the Sikhs, Gurmukhi being the script of their sacred literature. The circulation of the daily increased from 34, 000 in 1967 to 2.18 lakh by 1979, at a time when press was censored under the state of emergency as imposed by Mrs. Gandhi's government . These figures represent an increase of 541 percent in the period after the formation of the new Punjab and the beginning of the green revolution (Ibid: 154-55). The first quarter of Indian Readership Survey (IRS) Q1 2011 has revealed that today this paper is still a renowned newspaper of the state. Its circulation stands at 11.23 lakhs as compared to 11.18 lakh in the last survey and 10.58 lakh in IRS Q1 2010 thus the paper grow over than 6 % over the past one year. *Rojana Ajit* is famous in rural area

in all districts of Punjab across the region of Malwa, Majha and Doaba.²⁵

The Tribune Group

The Tribune owned by *the Tribune* Group Trust is English daily having significant circulation in Punjab. *The Tribune* was one of the earliest newspapers to be established in Punjab and its readership was among the upper class of Punjab at that time. It is the most widely read English newspaper in Punjab today. The newspaper was founded by the Jat Sikh aristocrat Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia and was first published on 2nd February, 1881. Sardar Majithia was known for his links between the aristocracy in Punjab and the rising intelligentsia. His family had an aristocratic background and had been open to modern English education and modern liberalism.²⁶

²⁵ www.allindiannewspapers.com>circulation of newspapers in Punjab [Accessed on 1 June, 2012]

On his return to India from England in 1876, after completing his studies, he became deeply involved in education and religious activities and became patron of several educational institutions. He was the sole proprietor of *The Tribune*, which he started as English daily in February 1881 and remain so until his death in 1889. It is stated that “no one rendered greater service to the cause of liberal education and progressive thinking in North India in the closing decades of the last century than Dyal Singh Majithia”(Deol 2000: 156) *The Tribune* was an active participant in the nationalist politics and it campaigned for a united India, which was in contrast to the British view as represented by men such as John Strachey (1888), who espoused that there is and never was an Indian nation and that people of different Indian regions do not feel that they belong to one nation (Ibid).

The Tribune is still the prominent newspaper of the elite, working employees and business class. Today Tribune has more than 6 lakh copies all over Punjab and known as the most acceptable English language newspaper among the students. It has five editions published from Chandigarh, Bathinda, New Delhi, Dehradun and Jalandher. The latest reports of 2011 ranked Tribune as a major newspaper in circulation in Punjab and other area of North India. The survey of IRS and the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) once again affirmed *The Tribune's* leadership. The IRS report of 2011 Q2 revealed that *The Tribune's* average issue readership is 5.46 lakh in Punjab.²⁷

²⁶ “He was born in 1849, the year when Punjab was annexed into an orthodox aristocratic Sikh family that hailed originally from Majithia in the district of Amritsar. His father Sardar Lehna Singh was a prominent official of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and in 1832 he was appointed as Governor of hill territories in the Maharaja Kingdom. On the death of his father, Dyal Singh inherited one of the wealthiest estates in the province. His childhood spent at his native village Majithia where he had taught by private tutors and English Governess. In 1874, he decided to visit England to complete his studies. He was deeply influenced by the liberalism sweeping England and spent considerable time with the prominent people discussing the cause of his country's backwardness” (Deol 2000: 155).

²⁷ www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20111015/main7.htm [Accessed on 31 May, 2012]

Table – 2.4
History of the Punjab vernacular press

Name of the paper	Hind S. Group	Ajit Group	Tribune Group
Year of establishment	1948	1944	1881
Language of initial Publication of	Urdu	Urdu	English
Other newspaper's (Hindi) Publication	<i>Punjab Kesri</i> (Hindi) Jagbani (P)	Daily Ajit (Punjabi)	Dainik-Tribune Punjabi Tribune (P)
Year of first publication	1965, 1978	1955	1978
Founder editor	Lala Jagat Narayan	Sadhu Singh	S.Dyal Majithia
Religion & cast of Aristocrat Founder editor's	Hindu/ Khatri	Sikh Khatri	Sikh/Jat
General orientation education,	Arya Samaj	Roots in the Singh Sabha movement	Western liberal outlook

Source- Deol, Harnik. *Religion and Nationalism in India- The case of Punjab*, London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Growing Literacy and Increasing Newspaper Circulation

The improvement in the literacy rate of postcolonial Punjab was a slow process, even as late as 1961 only 27 percent of the Punjabis could read and write.²⁸ But the state was making tremendous improvement in education in general. "By the year 1974, 78 per cent of primary age children in Punjab were attending school, the second highest in India, exceeded only by the southern state of Kerala (96 per cent)- India's most literate state (Jeffery, cited from Deol 2000: 150). In response to the growing demand, the number of primary school teachers rose from 23000 in 1966-67, as the period of green revolution began, to 34000 in 1970-71 (Ibid). By 1974, the rural population in Punjab had a primary school within two kilometers. The number of college students increased from 35000 in 1964-65 to 1 lakh in 1968-69 and 1.10 lakh in mid 1970's. By 1981, literacy in Punjab had risen to 41 per cent, 49 percent by 1992 (Ibid). This has resulted in the increasing popularity of

²⁸ "In 1961, 27 per cent of the total population of Punjab and 24 per cent of India's could read and write." (Statistical abstract of Punjab, 1992, cited from Deol 2000: 151).

newspapers in the state as reflected by the circulation surge registered by all the major news papers in the state.

Table 2.5
Circulation figures of three Newspapers in Punjab in 1991

Name of the paper	Language of publications	Circulations
Hind Samachar Group <i>Punjab Kesri</i>	Hindi	155, 239
Ajit Group <i>Rojana Ajit</i>	Punjabi	161, 811
Tribune Group <i>The Tribune</i>	English	74, 541

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), July-December 1991, Cited (Deol 2000: 153)

The vernacular press has become very important tool in short time and every sect of the society tried to start publishing their newspaper so as to utilize the emotions and strength to prefix their thoughts in the society in order to advance their stake in the face of competition for place and mobility among communities. The newspapers and the readers shared a relationship of mutuality wherein newspapers often reported the news stories in such a way as generate a public in favour of the position they have already subscribed to and otherwise report according to the sensibilities of the readers. With the rising number of literate population in Punjab, it is very much clear that the people began to take interest in vernacular press and relied them more for the information. As tables 2.6 and 2.7 shows *Punjab Kesri* and *Rojana Ajit* has got majority of its readers from the rural area unlike *the Tribune* which has got its readers mainly in the urban areas.

Table 2.6

Total readership of individual newspaper in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal in 1989 (in thousands)

	<i>Punjab Kesri</i>	<i>Rojana Ajit</i>	<i>The Tribune</i>
Total Readership	2914	515	778

Source: National readership survey (NRS) conducted by Operational Research Group (ORG) in 1989. Cited from Deol, 2000: 158

Table 2.7

Total readerships of three newspapers in urban and rural area, 1989 (in thousands)

	<i>Punjab Kesri</i>	<i>Rojana Ajit</i>	<i>The Tribune</i>
Urban	2302	506	606
Rural	644	359	172

Source: National readership survey (NRS) conducted by Operational Research Group (ORG) in 1989. Cited from Deol 2000: 158

As table no 2.5 exhibits by 1991 all the newspaper under discussion had substantial readership base in Punjab. The Hindi vernacular daily *Punjab Kesri* has got the highest readership among them, which was 2946 thousand. *The Tribune* figures next, though far behind, with 778 thousand readers in Punjab. The number shows that people of Punjab also kept interest in English news and, *The Tribune* exercise considerable influence in the state. *Rojana Ajit* is the least circulated daily among the three with 515 thousand readers. The *Punjab Kesri* dominates other in their urban readership too with 2302 thousand readers, whereas *The Tribune* and *Rojana Ajit* had 606 and 506 thousand readers respectively. However, *Rojana Ajit* has more readers in the rural areas than *The Tribune* though *Punjab Kesri* outnumbers both substantially; a testimony of the influence of Hindi in a state where the majority's mothers tongue is Punjabi.

Table 2.8
Occupation of newspaper readers, 1989 (in thousands)

	<i>Punjab Kesri</i>	<i>Rojana Ajit</i>	<i>The Tribune</i>
Professional	62	26	49
Clerks/Salesman/ Industrialist	446	122	230
Traders	580	81	81
Workers	219	96	12
Students	627	165	226
Housewife/Non working	808	213	137
Agriculturist	137	143	31
Artisan	6	-	-
Others	59	18	13

Source: National readership survey (NRS) conducted by Operational Research Group (ORG) in 1989. Cited from Deol 2000: 159.

The table 2.8 brings out a disaggregated profile of each newspaper's readership. In terms of absolute numbers in all categories the *Punjab Kesri* dominates its counterparts except that of agriculturalists. *Rojana Ajit* has got the highest number of readers among the agriculturalists – read Jat Sikhs in Punjab, the less well-off among the community were considered to be the major recruiting group of militancy (Singh 2001, Puri, Judge and Sekhon 1999). With these different constituencies and preferences, how these newspapers approached, responded and represented the militancy of Punjab is explored in the next two chapters.

Chapter-3
***'Press'ing Representations:
Media Stories of Categories and Violence***

“Where the press is free...all is safe,” written Thomas Jefferson almost hundred years back. Free press today is a pivotal norm of democratic societies, though it is challenged now and then even today. Moreover the world of media is a contested field wherein diverse interest and ideologies confront each other. The incidence of ‘terrorism’ and militancy is not exception (European Research Project 2008: 1); media can perpetuate the ideologies of violence and peace alike. Different forms of militancy and terrorism apparently get considerable media support in pursuit of their ideologies and its permeation to newer groups and areas. The former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, called media publicity as the oxygen of terrorism (Muller et al., 2003:, 65). Terrorism or militancy can also work as oxygen for media too. Media sensationalism in the modern times is deeply linked with business interest too as production of news in such a way to cater to peculiar groups and their interests can potentially win more audience or readers (McManus 1994, Kaplan 2008, Grabe et al. 2001).

This assumes additional significance when the primary readership constituencies of newspapers are polarized on communication lines. In order to keep their readership intact and possibly to expand it the media house would be taking an economically and politically conditioned position of writing according to the sentiments of their constituencies and often promoting such sentiments. Newspapers and media houses that are started sans explicit communitarian interests also would be forced to play according to the music of their respective constituencies which they developed over year. Moreover, under condition of prolonged militancy and violence the newspaper would be forced to take positions – against it, for it or in-between. Militancy and violence in that sense offers the media a crisis as well as an opportunity alike.

Press, A springboard of Punjab's Militancy?

Militancy in Punjab represents a black phase of the history of the state and the country at large. The period of 1978 to 1995, the general public of Punjab lived under fear and extreme violence perpetuated by the militants and the state. The violence unleashed by the militants and failure of the governance in state to bring the situation under control, was coupled with complicated situation unleashed by indiscriminate repression. The situation reached its boiling point with the Operation Blue Star in an attempt to regain the holly shrine from the militants and the Indian army and militants engaged in direct fight with heavy ammunition inside the Golden Temple. What followed was great turmoil, mixed with violence and state repression.

As the burning issue of the time the columns of every vernacular newspapers and national press were filled with incidents of violence and the casualties they produced. The situation was such that the front page of newspaper in Punjab were earmarked for covering the incidents of bloodshed; and the reporting of violence in a partisan manner resulted in distrust between the communities Hindus and Sikhs.

The militants themselves considered media as a crucial instrument in reaching out to the wider population for harnessing support and eliciting sympathies for their causes. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala who spearheaded the separatist movement was very keen to get his stories planted in the press. The recollection of journalist Sanjiv Gaur, who was correspondent of Indian Express in Amritsar in 1982. When he went to meet Bhindranwala in Room No. 47 of the residential chambers inside the Golden Temple complex, has been revealing in this connection.

I was ushered in. Bhindranwala, in a long blue robe, was reclining on a cot. He was also wearing a pistol." He [Bhindranwala] was publicity conscious and pampered journalists as long as they did not write critical stories. There is no doubt that he was news worthy (Kumar 1997: 121).

It is also pointed out that he used to meticulously browse through the newspapers. He was apparently very keen to see how the press covers him and his actions. The same journalist who got a warm reception in the beginning, recalls how it went underwent dramatic change after a while.

Gaur did a few stories on Bhindranwala, particularly highlighting his violent tactics and his alleged tirade against Hindus. He also did a story on how former Naxalites intruded into Bhindranwala's camp and the story appeared in the front page of the newspaper. The response of the militant leader when he met him next was very different.

When next time I went to see him, he was very angry. He was downright insulting: What have you written? He asked me, "how dare you?" he went on. I was completely shaken. At that time, Bhindranwale was talking to Anikendra Nath Sen, currently the resident editor of the Times of India, who was then working for a magazine called 'Probe'. As Bhindranwale saw me, He forgot all about the interview he was giving, and started shouting at me. He was downright insulting me and asked me "How dare you" and went on (Ibid: 125).

It is also interesting to note that the press themselves acknowledge the role of media in making the situation worse. The communication press has been self-allegedly forms the root causes of the problem. The following editorial of the *Rojana Ajit* holds the Hindu press primarily responsible for the trouble of Punjab, though the usage 'communal press of Jalandher' worked like a cannon also against itself.

If I am allowed to say the truth, I will say that the root cause of whole problem present in Punjab is this [sic] communal press of Jalandher. The agitation against Punjabi language is an old chapter now, those people who supported the campaign hurt the sentiments of Punjab. But one more important thing we want to say to all our brethren in the press that now we should not take decision only in terms of our business. At this point in time, there is danger on Punjab and if we continue to get caught in our business interest only, then the differences between all will only aggravate and situation will be worse and would not return on normalcy.

('Newspaper Ownership and Business of Leadership', Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 2 May 1984)

The editorial written by founder editor of *Rojana Ajit* Dr. Sadhu Singh Hamdard, just a month before the Operation Blue Star, reflects the negative role played by the

press in worsening the situation. He also points out the underlying business interests. Obviously, the editorial was targeting the Hindi press and was directly attacking the opposite groups in the press and in politics, though it turns out to be self-critical. It also clearly brings out the strong communitarian undercurrent the media reporting and constituency to which such reporting was directed. This clearly brings out a situation in which the fourth estate fails to become a corrective force, but become instrument in perpetuating violence and divisive politics.

Optics of Looking at Militants: Categories of Convenience

It is already established that categories are not pre-given, but are established through cultural interventions and processes of mediation. The politics of construction in the creation of knowledge and construction of dichotomous categories like sane/insane, civilization/madness, orient/occident, etc are inextricably related to cultural politics of domination (Foucault 1980, Said 1979). The relegation of resistant people and groups as violent, insane, fanatic and barbaric was part of the colonial strategy of de-legitimizing popular struggles against domination (Ansari 2005, Arnold 1986, Makor 1999, Hardiman 1987). The use of categories with varying emphasis apart from the projection of categories in different contexts also makes a difference. The different types of branding done on the militants in different contexts by the newspapers under study, explicate the complicated manner in which they are used and circulated. The frequent use of appellations like *ugarvadis*, *atvadis*, *deshtvadis*, *deshgards*, terrorists and extremist in different context and with implied meanings are revealing the underlying media preferences and the position they are taking in the issue of militancy. According to their respective positions and political leanings the press sometimes downsizes, sometimes blown it out of proportion and some other times fiddle middle grounds through selective deployment of appellations used to describe militants. The analysis here in this regard is done by looking at a select number of editorials of the newspapers under this study.

The editorials of *Rojana Ajit*, in line with their communitarian and ideological leanings, has been describing the militants as *atvadis*, a carefully chosen appellation which is lesser in intensity and contempt than usage like *ugarvadi* and

deshtvadi, but at the same time treating them as different from the general Sikh public. The editorial of *Rojana Ajit* on 19 July written by Dr. Sadhu Singh Hamdard, on the other hand, express its disillusionment in the indiscriminate branding of people as *atvadis* and take relief with the fact that the Prime Minister refused to brand every Sikh as *atvadi*. It also indirectly attaches some importance to the designation as every looter and gossip cannot be notified as *atvadis*.

I appeal to all that now we should not going back to the cases of a *atvadis*. We are notifying every looter as *atvadi* or *deshtpasand*. The newspapers even brand clean shaved people from other states as Sikhs and miscreants among them are called *atvadis*. But now even Smt. Indira Gandhi said that every Sikh is not *atvadi*.

(‘You have taken pain Sadhu Singh Hamdard’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 20 July, 1984)

In a subsequent editorial it regrets the growing tendency of branding Sikhs as *atvadis*, which is allegedly the handwork of vested interests. It also warned that such thoughtless acts would only deepen the differences between Hindus and Sikhs.

All the *atvadis* seen as Sikhs, and this perception, we say will create more difference between Hindus and Sikhs. Now even Smt. Gandhi has stated that calling all Sikhs as *atvadis* is wrong. The truth is that is a misconception spread deliberately by a few people and Sikhs would mind it. If we continue see and discuss all *atvadis* as Sikhs, then this will lead to further discussion that why and how someone become *atvadi*. I want to say only this that should not be recollecting the tough times; so we should not enter into further discussion on *atvadis*.

(‘You have taken pain Sadhu Singh Hamdard’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 21th July, 1984)

The editorial in a reverse logic also asks the question if Sikhs are *atvadis* what made them *atvadis*. The newspaper by this exercise makes it apparent that they at best relate with the issue on which militancy is based on, or at the least sympathize with the cause of the militants whom they referred to as *atvadis*.

The same editorial reflects the religious angle of the whole issue and indicating that the insult of Akal Takht has left wounds in the hearts of Punjabis/Sikhs. In the same breadth, it also holds the 'Jalandher press', an obvious reference to *Punjab Kesri* and *Hind Samachar Group*, responsible for the problem.

Also we have appealed to the people; the basic meaning of that appeal was that the assault on Akal Takht (whoever is responsible) created wounds in the hearts of Punjabis; now it is time to heal such wounds. Even those people who may not be in agreement with me that the Jalandher press is responsible for the problem, even then my appeal is appropriate that for this healing Jalandher press can jointly play a lead role (Ibid).

Before this, on 3rd May, *Rojana Ajit* writes another editorial 'In the light of Singh Sahibans' appeal in the context of increasing exchange in the media regarding the real character of *atvad* in Punjab.²⁹

The appeal issued from five Singh Sahibans has been published by *Ajit* as it is. Before making this appeal Singh Sahibans talked to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Talwandi group, *Akhand Kirtni Jatha*, Sikh Student Federation, *Babar Khalsa* Youth Akali Dal and members of SGPC and listened to their views. After which Singh Sahibans appealed to all the concerned to agree upon the 6 points they put forward. Following are those six points; no individual should take any fight any time inside the Darbar Sahib Amritsar Complex, stop all threatening, tortures and killings of human beings, there should not be any killing inside the premises of Darbar Sahib at any cost, stop hate speeches and allegations between the groups which only increase the gap between the groups, Start working on regaining the respect and power of the community and the purity of Darbar Sahib should be maintained at any cost and there should not be any wrong incidents occurring the Darbar Sahib that would create inconvenience for the devotees.

²⁹ Singh Sahibans are the five Sikh high priests of the Akal Takht, supreme for all Sikhs. During the time of militancy, when people were getting killed on the roads and inside the Darbar Sahib complex where thousands of devotees pay obeisance regularly became a matter of great concern to all. . At that moment, Singh Sahibans made an appeal to all the Sikh groups in Punjab to make situation peaceful and issued an appeal where they want assurance from all the moderate and hard liner groups to maintain peace inside the Darbar Sahib complex. This appeal was issued around one month before the Operation Bluestar.

(‘Through the Singh Sahibans appeal’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 3 May, 1984)

The editorial, taking it beyond the confines of religious sentiments, also gives its analysis about the material background of *atvad*. The argument reflects a growing sense of alienation in Punjab as a result of step-motherly attitude by the Indian state and the majority community. The issues include denial of water which is entitled to Punjab, cutting the state in its territorial size and the alleged preference given to Hindi over Punjabi. *atvad* is seen as an enforced reply to such atrocities.

The territory of Punjab is being grabbed away. Putting all the law and order in the backburner, the water of Punjab is being taken away from the state. The situation is grave that though Punjab owns the water, it is disallowed to use it. Chandigarh was built for Punjab and in lieu of that the two districts Abohar and Fazilka has been taken away. Hurdles are created everywhere in using the recycled water released through canals from the Ropar Power Plant. If Hindi language can be practiced by Punjabi Hindus, what is the fault of Sikhs in those 202 villages in which they not use Hindi but merged into Haryana? Is it that Punjab is being treated as a step child? The reply for these kinds of atrocities is just *atvad* (Ibid).

This point is reiterated by subsequent editorials too. For instance, the one on 29th May 1984, the newspaper express its disillusionment in being the militants referred to as *atvadis*. It replies the statist attempt of relegating the ideology of militancy as *atvad* by stating that *atvadis* are created by the state as it neither paid attention to nor tried to understand the language of peaceful protest.

We are asking to Smt. Gandhi that our ears are full with listening to promises that government is ready to accept the demands; but *atvadis* disturb the atmosphere in the state. We are asking her who produced *atvad*. Is it not a creation of the government’s attitude where in they did not understand the language of peaceful Morcha?

(‘Right and Justice are with You’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 29 May, 1984)

The newspaper also lambasts the position taken by its counterparts on Punjab militancy. The editorial of 10th July 1984, for instance, takes on *The Tribune*, for its alleged condemnation of *atvad* as terrorism and suggestion that movement only

create a situation that would disconnect the Sikhs from the national mainstream. It also reminds the detractors that Sikhs are not supporters of Khalistan and they are still part of the nation of 'Hindustan'. This has been done in reaction to the allegation of anti nationalism as involved in *atvad*. The call to make right statements based on truth and allegation that *The Tribune* editor is a friend of Mrs. Gandhi make the semantics clear. In English *Tribune*, Editor Shri Prem Bhatia wrote an editorial on 9th July.

The mobilization of arms by terror creators in Darbar Sahib Complex became misfortune for the community. Sikh brotherhood lost the sympathy that they had gained from different political parties in the country....Are Sikhs supporters of Khalistan? So many times Akali made it clear that they are not in favor of Khalistan instead of that they are part of Hindustan. This position remains unchanged even today. The said incidents of Punjab are not related to Khalistan; but vested interest forcefully try to create an impression in that direction; but Sikh community has nothing to do with that....We laughed at the writing of our friend who is a friend of Mrs. Gandhi, and also is immature. We knows that he our brother will be angry on us on this issue; but we request him discussion on such serious matters should be based on correct position and facts. He also cannot say that we misrepresented his writing or torn it. We have taken this from the group's Punjabi language paper.

(‘Wrong talks are dangerous’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 10 July, 1984)

The editorials of *Rojana Ajit* thus in line with its communitarian predilections have carefully used the appellation of *atvadis* to describe the militants, with a meaning of extremists and short of terrorists as the contextual meaning would suggest, and the movement as *atvad*. This usage semantically falls short of *ugarvadis* and *ugravad*, used by the state and unsympathetic media to describe the same. In the same vein *Ajit* editorials lambasts at the discrimination and atrocities done on Punjab and Sikhs and suggest it as the root cause of *atvad*. It also feels that relegating and fixing the militants as *atvadis* would not serve the purpose, as arguably it involves no effort to address the issue but the easy way attributing them with anti-national intentions. The newspaper reacts strongly to the attempt relegate the Sikh community due to the *atvad* movement as *dehestvadis* and anti nationals and take pains to reiterate the nationalist credentials of community, indicating the

overreaching power of the nationalist discourse. This is certainly an exercise that has been done with the selective intellect- being soft to the increasing radicalization of a section of Sikhs for a separate homeland, alongside giving voice to their concerns

The *Punjab Kesri*, known for tough stand on militancy, makes no qualms in branding the militants as *ugarvadis* which is used in with a clear sense as-terrorists.³⁰ It often finds resemblance with the statist discourses on militancy in Punjab. *Punjab Kesri*, with a predominant Hindu constituency of readers, has been branded often as Hindu press by newspaper like *Rojana Ajit*. It's the editorial on the Moga gurdwara blockage issue is revealing.³¹

In the past few days in Moga, Border Security Force (BSF) put three Gurdwaras under blockade, which ended 3 May. In order to force the government to end the blockade, Sant Longowal had threatened to send martyrs groups and Jathedars to Moga.... Inside the gurdwara and also recovered arms too....But Sant Longowal and other Akali leaders declared it as pure lie and that no Ugarvadi was captured nor recovered any arms as the BSF did not had had permission to enter the gurdwaras.....DC Faridkot moved into gurdwaras along with a few local residents in the evening at 6.30 for an inspection in order to assure that there are no arms and suspected person are inside the gurdwara. They checked each of the room in

³⁰ This is largely the statist language. 'The effective step in next 15 days to handle *ugarvadis*' news published in *Punjab Kesri* on 19 May in which Minister of states for Home Ministry Shri. P. Venkat Subaaya declared that Indian government is taking effective steps to handle *ugarvadis* in Punjab and to solve other problems. On 26 May, another news in *Punjab Kesri* 'Searching for Supporter Elements of *ugarvadis* in police' published in which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi explained that government is finding a way to solve the Punjab problem and those people are saying that she has not any worry regarding state problem, is misleading the people. She explained this to a group of delegates from Punjab at Delhi. A news published on 30 June, 1984 in *Punjab Kesri* 'Ugarvadi put their arsenal at that place where people bowed their head' in which CM Darbara Singh blamed to *ugarvadis* for all to the distortion in Punjab.

³¹ Moga Gurdwara Blockade: Paramilitary forces barricade three gurdwaras in Moga district based on in which they had information that *ugarvadis had taken shelter* inside the worship place. So they covered up the gurdwaras and the blockade remained for seven days and forces did not permit anyone to move inside or outside the gurdwara during the time. According to some reports, 16 people were arrested and 13 arms recovered from them but it became a issue when spokesman of SGPC categorically denied the same. *Punjab Kesri* also published article on 6 May, 1984 in which they thank to the steps taken by the government for peacefully solving the blockade issue of gurdwaras. *The Tribune* published a news on 3 May 'Gurdwara siege Lifted' in which they described that a 7 days old blocked of 3 gurdwaras siege is lifted by the BSF and total 300 inmates are released for their homes after the peacefully solving the matter.

gurdwara. Akali leaders can say that when they sent in Shaeedi Morcha towards Gurdwara, BSF lifted the blockade of gurdwara. The government can say it encircled the place in order to catch them from their hideouts in the gurdwara and fired at the BSF from inside....about the issue, Sardar Atma Singh, acting president SGPC, and Secretary Sardar Maan Singh has seen submitted a report to the Morcha dictator President Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. Some portion of the report has been already published in a Punjabi daily from Jalandher. According to that report, there is *jungle raj* in Moga, due to which eight people have been died. Even badly wounded people in the firing bullets were arrested. Police and BSF surrounded gurdwara from nearby houses and has setup protection walls with sand bags. Nobody was allowed to enter or go outside from the gurdwara.

(‘Who’s Win?’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 6 May, 1982)

On 17th June, just after 10 days of Operation Blue Star, *Punjab Kesri* again wrote to express their concern and worry that *ugarvadis* should not be taken lightly as they can regroup and strike again. The call was on a military intelligence shared by the Major General who led the army into the Golden Temple.

The intensions of *ugarvadis* can be understood from the reply of Major General Brar that the life of granthis of Golden Temple and Akal Takht are still under danger and hence they have arrangements at their houses too. Major General Brar accepted that still *ugarvadis* moves in the small groups inside the state and hope that sooner they will be under control.

(‘Still We Need to be Alert’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 17 June, 1984)

In a subsequent editorial entitled “Do the care immediately”, *Punjab Kesri* again raised concern about the people lived nearby houses and shop owners near to the holy shrine. The branding is yet again as *ugarvadis* and making series of strong allegations about the level of ammunition within the Golden Temple. It also foregrounds the anti-national and subversive intentions of the *ugarvadis* because of the foreign hand they could see in the whole encounter. The *ugarvadis* are also said to be heavily armed as the army officers reportedly felt that they were encountering a third world war.

Before the army action, *ugarvadis* forcefully took charge of the houses surrounding the Darbar Sahib complex and get prepared themselves for a fight in *Machans* and *Morcha*. They were ready for any army actions against them which is evident from the *Morcha* they raised inside the Darbar Sahib with the help of sound war plan. They expected a government action against them at any point in time...it is already in news that Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale himself has distributed arms and ammunitions to *ugarvadis* and with the help of Subeg Singh created a very stronger indoor security inside the Darbar Sahib in such a way that once somebody is in could never go back., He also stationed *ugarvadis* on the *Burji's* of the holy shrine.... The arms and ammunition recovered during the action establishes that foreign powers are providing support to them at all levels. Even in 1965 and 1971 wars between Indian and Pakistan, this much bullets were not used by Pakistani army as in the Operation Blue Star by the *ugarvadis*. It was the reason why the army officer made a statement in an interview replied that they were feeling that as if they were fighting the third world war.

(‘Do the care immediately’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 24 June, 1984)

The same editorial also circulate the idea that “in order to create fear among the people during the operation, *ugarvadis* came out [from the golden temple] and set the market on fire, resulting the whole shops catching fire and reduced to ashes.

In a subsequent editorial the newspaper raises its concerns about the proposal of withdraw army from Punjab as they see *ugarvadis* still quite active in the state. It reminds the central government the poor law and order situation in the state calls for informed decision in this connection. It attributes the responsibility of Operation Blue Star to SGPC as they allegedly could not hold Guru’s dharma and allowed the militants to take shelter in the holy shrine and convert into the armory.

While demanding to call back the army from Punjab, it should not be forgotten that at a time when the army is vacating the national highways and other public places, a lot of ammunition is being recovered on a daily basis and more and more suspected *ugarvadis* are being captured. Violent incidents still occur though in limited scale. In July, number of murders is declined but one or two murders continue to occur on every day basis. Moreover Sikh Student Federation once again revived their activities under

its new name the Black Beard.....It is well known that SGPC did not adequately honored their responsibility to uphold the Guru's shrine in the sanctity. This is pointed out not only by the government but even opposition parties endorse this. If SGPC was successful in their duty then Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale would not have succeeded in capturing the Akal Takht and the government would not have forced to be into a situation to issue a white paper on the matter.

(‘To the Akali Leaders’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 15 July, 1984)

It also calls for Hindu-Sikh unity and suggested the renovation of golden temple and building friendly relation between the communities. It also called the Akali leadership to work for community amity and resolve the fissures in social fabric created by the activities of *ugarvadis* instead of organizing *Shaeedi Jathas*.

In order to bring Punjab into normalcy and heal the wounds of the people it is utmost important that *Kar seva* for renovation Darbar Sahib should start immediately. The five Singh Sahibans also insisted to start this work without any delay. The octogenarian Sikh leader Baba Kharag Singh also accepted the proposal. In the task of renovation, if the Hindus and the Sikhs work together then the differences between the two would be bridged at the larger level. But it is said that after one and a half hour talk consultation with friends of *ugarvadis*, *Baba Kharag Singh* now have withdrawn his support to the idea of renovation. It is a matter of concern if what is said is true....we know that Akali leaders are not keen to listen to us. But for the future of Punjab and them also, we definitely want to say that they should act after thinking and understanding and they should never do the kind of work which would upset the peaceful environment. They should cancel their present program of sending *Shaeedi Jathas* [Martyr Groups] and instead create a context for renovation work at Golden Temple to get start, in which the Hindus and Sikhs would work together (Ibid).

In short, the *Punjab Kesri* has strongly joined the discourse in which the militants are called nothing short of terrorists. Their attitude towards SGPC and Akali Dal has been extremely critical for their role in the whole movement. The striking similarity of

its editorial rhetoric with that of the state is something that underlines their branding of militants as *ugravadis* in all its negative connotations.

The editorials of *The Tribune* unambiguously express its nationalist predilections. The Tribune, in their evaluation, tried their best to keep the situation under control, but remained targeted by 'partisan newspapers' like *Rojana Ajit*. The latter alleged and openly condemned *The Tribune* for their alleged anti Sikh stands. However *the Tribune* often ignored such allegations and did not respond in a manner in which would complicate the situation, but they had no doubts about describing the militants as terrorists and thereby anti-nationals. *The Tribune's* support to the statist actions on the militants is apparent in their editorials. At the first instance they raise grave concerns on the escalating violence in Punjab due to the handy works of the 'terrorists'. It calls for state actions to combat 'terrorism' and save the helpless people of Punjab hit with bloodshed and violence.

Two VIP visits to Chandigarh in the last few days have left the helpless people of Punjab wondering as to what Delhi's intention are in the matter of tackling the state's burgeoning problems. Both Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. PC Sethi had nothing to offer on the substantive issue or on ways to combat the wave of violence and terrorism in Punjab. There was a glib claim about the administration having come to grips with the terrorist's problem. What sort of a grip it became frightfully evident by an event that took place at Amritsar within 24 hours. Two terrorists on a bicycle gunned down Mr. Bachan Singh, retired Deputy Superintendent of Police, his wife and gunman and left the scene without any trouble. Mr. Sethi has proposed to set up a 'task force' to deal with the terrorists. More paramilitary units are being sent as proof of the administration having started reacting to terrorist's activities.

(‘Time for Delhi to Act’, Editorial, *The Tribune*, 3 May, 1984)

It also raised serious concerns about the manner in which different political parties were using militancy for their advantage by making allegations and counter allegations. More importantly, attempt on the part of the Congress (I) to see Bhindranwala as primarily a religious leader is seen as an attempt to oversee the seditious activities of the militant leader. K.R Sunder Rajan's article on the position taken by Rajiv Gandhi is a case in point.

Take for instance, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's statement in Chandigarh that Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale is a religious leader and has shown no inclination towards politics. The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) is up in arms against this assessment. According to Mr. L.K Advani, Mr. Gandhi description of Sant Jarnail Singh as a religious leader amounts not only to condoning violence but to giving murder and mayhem religious respectability. In his view Mr. Gandhi's clarification only proves to the hilt the charge made by the BJP that the Congress (I) has been consciously and systematically projecting the Sant as the principal leader to the Sikhs and has been trying to boost his personally, totally unmindful of the fact that his has been the greatest contribution towards vitiating the atmosphere in Punjab.

(‘Not by Guns Alone’, Article, *The Tribune*, 7 May, 1984)

At the same time, through some of other editorials they attempted to bring in a balance. It expresses its relief to know that the intentions of the militant leader is not really separatist. One of the editorials describes the meeting of two senior politicians Mr. S.M Joshi and Mr. N.G Goray with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala and exchanges between them on the issue of separate nation and homeland for the Sikhs.

While denying the contention that they had given a clean chit to Sant Jarnail Singh, The two Janta leaders who enjoy great esteem all over the country said, When we asked Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale whether Khalistan was his ultimate objective, he immediately responded by saying that taking into consideration the sacrifices his community had made during the freedom struggle. There was no reason why he should think of opting out of the Indian union. It was as much theirs as of others and there was no question of leaving it (Ibid).

The Tribune also makes its position indirectly clear on the Operation Blue Star and tell the press to maintain restrain without further complicating the crisis situation. It was certain for them that the press should not be doing anything that would add to the ‘difficulties to the authorities, civil and military’, but at the same time it reminds the government that the state is not fighting the press but the terrorist.

Press publicity and comments in a crisis situation of the kind prevailing in Punjab cannot be entirely or even largely favorable to the government. While newspapers must do nothing to add to the difficulties of the authorities, civil and military, they have to access the developments according to their reasoning....The peremptory restrictions on news coverage when the army action around the golden temple complex began made one wonder whether the government was fighting the press addition to the terrorists.

(‘Press Relations in Punjab’, Article, *The Tribune*, 14 June, 1984)

These editorials through their typical naming and positioning make the positions apparent of the newspapers being studied here on the whole issue of militancy in Punjab. While *Punjab Kesri* make no stones unturned in branding the militants as *ugravadis* and condemning their anti-national and separatist intents. *The Tribune* though remained critical of the state for curtailing in the freedom of press called the militants as terrorists and had little sympathies for their cause. It is not surprising that the language of these newspapers, though with differences in magnitude and intensity, were very near to that of the state and the nationalist rhetoric. *Rojana Ajit* on the other hand refused to call them by a name equivalent to terrorists, but was using *atvadis*, which is largely equivalent to extremist in English. At the same time, it also attempts to highlight the material and religious reasons behind *atvad*, alongside the divides created by partisan governance. The newspapers sometimes criticize the *atvadis* as anti-nationals and separatists. It also reminds the reader and the public the moralities of *atvad* as the latter according to them is not a spontaneous outburst but outcome of concrete circumstances of discriminations and insult. The newspapers under the study thus looked at militancy from their own set positions and branded the militants accordingly.

Beating the Bush?: Representing a Murder

The media representation of the murder of a well known journalist reveals the conflicting emphasis and underlying ideologies in the media representation even when one among the media fraternity lost his life to militants. Romesh Chander- the chief editor of HSG which publishes *Punjab Kesri* was gunned down in his car at *Baba Namdev Chowk* in Jalandher on 12 May 1984 while he was heading back

after attending a program in connection with the National Unity Day observance. He succumbed to bullet injuries in his neck and other parts of the body. His two gunmen were also badly injured in this militant attack.³² It was a major setback for the HSG as it lost its founder editor and Romesh Chander's father Lala Jagat Narayan in 1981.³³

The editorial on *The Tribune* appeared in 14 May captured their anger and remorse in the brutal incident. In this strongly worded editorial, the newspaper was quite convinced that it was a political murder alongside registering its concerns that the incident happened immediately after the release of Akali leaders who were detained for burning the article 25 of the Indian constitution.

Tears and anger are invariably joined when killing results from cruel political revenge. The beastly murder of Romesh Chander, Editor in Chief of the HSG of newspapers has already caused both grief and violent protest. More of the latter may be on the way despite the administration's customary procedural precautions after a grave tragedy. A highly successful proprietor-journalist, Romesh Chander was known to be on the assassin's hit list for at least two years after the murder of his father in September, 1981. The killer has announced their intentions in public and personal in letters to him and others. They have now carried out their threat now. The timing of the crime may, however, be significant, Romesh Chander was gunned down within 24 hours of the release of Akali leaders detained for burning or defacing article 25 of the constitution.

³² All prominent newspapers published news on the brutal murder of editor of Romesh Chander by the militants. *The Tribune* wrote on May 13 'Hind Samachar Editor Shot Dead' on front page in which news explains that four unidentified people gunned down the editor of Hind Samachar Romesh Chander. *Rojana Ajit* printed this news inside the paper in which they explained 'Shri Romesh died after gunned down with bullet in Jalandher. *Punjab Kesri* had faced a big loss. They published full front page news on the murder of their editor with photographs of the place of incident. All the three papers carried this issue in serious manner and explained the each instance from the bottom of the edge.

³³ Lala Jagat Narayan, a Chopra Khatri and Congress Party leader, has been based in Lahore before he immigrated to India as a refugee following partition in 1947. He started the Urdu daily *Hind Samachar* in 1948 from Jalandher. Jagat Narayan, realizing the depleting importance of Urdu in India, founded *Punjab Kesri*, a Hindi daily, in 1964. Narayan, an *Arya Samaji* was a prominent critic of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. He was shot dead on September 9, 1981, near Amaltas Motel on the national highway while returning to Jalandher from Patiala. The White Paper issued by the government of India, mentioned that Narayan was assassinated because of his criticism of Bhindranwale. See, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagat_Narayan (Accessed on 15 May 2012)

(‘Tears and Anger’, Editorial, *The Tribune*, 14 May, 1984)

The newspaper also cautions the government that the incident might be an act of deterrence to prevent the ongoing attempts to work out a negotiated settlement between the Akali Dal and the government. It calls for a mature response to the situation from both the central government and Akalis and do not get carried away by emotions. It also reminds the government and public how Akalis were important in finding out a solution to the problem as extremist elements within its faction are increasing and there is an urgency need to strengthen the voices of the moderate elements.

In view of earlier attempts by some to prevent a negotiated settlement between the centre and the Akali Dal, the murder of Romesh Chander was most probably intended to forestall the possibility of conciliatory talks to end the current stalemate in Punjab. If these assumptions are correct, the Prime Minister and her colleagues should become wiser than they have been so far about the serious difficulties they face in resuming their dialogue with the Akalis. This was the purpose to set free Mr. Parkash Singh Badal, Mr. Gurcharan Singh Tohra and others are not a great secret. They did not ask to be set free. The government could have kept them in custody to await trials if it wished to opt for that course.....The Akalis have been proved right. While the leaders were locked up, the killer squads were busy building up their resources and capability to strike. The concerted raid on 37 railway stations in the state last month were proof enough of their greater power for damage (Ibid).

The editorial of *Rojana Ajit* on May 14 tries to become sober in its details but slips into visible indifference in utterance at the moment of a brutal incident. It attempts to present the incident in a matter of fact manner. However, the emphasis of the whole editorial appears to be the violence that followed the murder rather than the murder *per se*.

The Editor of HSG Shri Romesh Chander is killed yesterday by bullets fired by a few unknown people. He himself was driving the car; two gunmen Ajit Singh and Diwan Chand were sitting in the back seat. Shri Romesh Chander died on the spot and the two security guards were rushed to the hospital in

unconscious condition. Immediately after the incident, a big crowd gathered the spot and in anger set ablaze the public transport buses and a few nearby shops. The angry mob then went to the old bus station and burnt the diesel drums. The branches of PNB Bank, United Commercial Bank and Vijaya Bank were also burnt. It is also said around a dozen buses inside the depot were burned by them. The flames were visible from one kilometer distance. Guru Nanak Library from where Romeshje came out after attending the program was also burnt down.

(The Death of Romeshje, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 14 May, 1984)

Rojana Ajit's clearly hint that the mob violence erupted following the murder of Romesh Chander was directed towards the Sikh community. It also raises its concerns in the way in which the mob took law and order in their hands. It also felt that the call for a *bandh* in protest of the murder would only deteriorate the situation further.

The mob tried to set ablaze so many shops like Blue Star, Chinese Shoes, Sahani Radio, Pahwa Refreshers and Singh Brothers. The mob also threw stones on vehicles of people belonging to one particular community apart from beating them up. The Hindu *Suraksha Sena* of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal jointly gave a call for a Punjab *bandh* on Monday in protest to the murder. We are sure that in such a sensitive situation calling for a Punjab *bandh* would only disturb the situation further. The mob had taken the law and order in their hands and did not allow anybody to come near the dead body for one hour...I have been appreciated within the newspaper fraternity in Delhi. I had a lot of difference with Romeshje but all the differences have come to end with his death. As newspaper owner he was good natured, he was good human being in our society and on his death, I am sad (Ibid).

The *Punjab Kesri* on the other hand sees the violence essentially as a result of failure on the part of the administration. In the editorial written on 20 May, it recollects that the body of their chief editor remained in the car unattended for three hours which made the mob to go out of control. The anger was particularly directed at the government, though it admits that looters and anti-social elements too have taken advantage of the situation. It is also recollected that though there was a mob

cry to burn the shops of the Sikhs, the fire burned Hindus shops too; and the looters did not discriminate between the Hindus and Sikhs. It also gives statistics of the number of burned shops belonging to both the communities.

The fact that Shri Romesh Chander's body remained for three hours in the car was enough to make mob go out of control and it was not surprising. The mob burnt 14 to 15 buses, a Fire Brigade vehicle and also burnt central information office. It was all against the failure of the government and the sentiments were against the administration. But the looters and fundamental elements has given the emotions of an angry mob a communal colour. It is true at first there was a call from the mob to burn the shops of Sikhs, but the same fire also has caught the shops of Hindus too. The aim of looter is to loot, whether Hindu or Sikh. Out of the seven shops burnt, four shops belonged to Sikhs, two to Hindus and one was a Chinese shoe shop. The mob also burnt the furniture and records of Laxmi Bank... During the curfew more shops were burnt in different parts of the city. As a result the shopkeepers, both Hindus and Sikhs, began to shift goods from shops to their respective houses.

(‘The Incident in Jalandher on 12 May is due to the failure of Government and Administration’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 20 May 1984)³⁴

The editorial also pushes forward a few crucial points which apparently infuriated *Rojana Ajit*. That if the administration did its duty on time the situation wouldn't have gone out of control; the burning and looting were not under anyone's control and nobody directed this; that the murder of Romesh Chander was the main reason that kindled the violence; that there was clear paralysis of the governmental machinery and the looting has been heavy and that some anti-social elements were trying to give a communal colour to the incident.³⁵

³⁴ Originally published in the newspaper *Nawa Jamana* and then republished by *Punjab Kesri*

³⁵ The *Punjab Kesri* in remorse and grief has put the administration under fire even for not responding on time for their call to fix up the time of cremation; “On 13th May morning I arrived Delhi from Bombay and from there I reached to Jalandher. When I reached home, all the members, relatives and friends were eagerly waiting so that decisions on the last rites of Romeshje could be decided. It was not right to keep body of Romeshje at home for long. Our family members and friends of Romeshje were continuing in touch with administration but nothing was getting finalized. At 10.30 when I reached home, under guidance of Dr. Baldev Parkash, friends and family members

The response of *Rojana Ajit* was fuming as indicated by the editorial of 20 May, which criticizes the position taken by the *Punjab Kesri* for its alleged soft position on violence directed towards Sikhs. It also criticizes the allegation of the latter that *Ajit* is trying to communalize the whole issue. It also points out the violent mob did not allow the police to reach the spot to take control of the situation contrary to the argument of *Punjab Kesri*.

On the sad murder of Shri Romesh Chander, G.T Road has been blocked for full three hours....Stones were pelted on a specific community and shops were burnt selectively. One or two shops belonging to the other religious group were also burnt. To make the turmoil an issue, one newspaper writes that the culprits will be known only after the police investigation. What has been happened is very bad and no amount of condemnation is less. This fire wouldn't have happened if police were present over there. The newspaper also writes that the police was not present for three hours of the murder. As a result the people got chance to go unruly and to set the shops ablaze. If the police reach the spot in time, the loss would have been much lesser. But it is a matter of great concern that the sad incident has been converted into a communal issue... DC came on spot but stone were pelted on his car. City In-charge DSP Harpal Singh tried so many times that police reach up to the body but nobody allowed the police. So three hours mob did what they want. What the police can do?

(‘Let Mercy on Punjab Now’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 20 May, 1984)

The language gets acrimonious further as *Rojana Ajit* takes on the suggestion of *Punjab Kesri* that the violence was spontaneous out of public anger and it was not directed towards any particular community, instead both the communities suffered out of it.

These kinds of people can condemn the administration or police or they condemn Sant Longowal or Sant Bhindrawale or Akalis. Now, we should think what the Akalis of Jalandher is saying that only shops of the Sikhs were

were trying to contact IGP Punjab, DC and SSP Jalandher and but in vain.” (‘These New Cremation Grounds’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 27 May, 1984)

burnt. We ask that why during the curfew on 14 Feb, only shops of Sikhs were looted. If we talk of Laxmi Commercial Bank, the building can belong to anyone but the directors of the bank are mostly Sikhs. For the time being, we accept that this building belongs to a Hindu but Blue Star or Sahani Radio shops were also burnt because of this reason (Ibid).

Here paper writes against the attempts to give it a communal colour to the incident. It writes that the *Punjab Kesri* on the other hand continue to register its protest in the alleged attempts to give the mob violence a communal colour.

In this situation, it is wrong to give it to a communal colour. It should be our common demand that the looters and the culprits should be arrested and should be dealt with severe measures. The burnt shops should be given right appropriate compensation. In this situation it is inappropriate for the part of the city Akali Dal to call for a *bandh* on 16th May, only to give it to a communal colour.... If Hindus and Sikhs brethrens work together to help the shopkeepers at the receiving end, the communal environment would decline. ('The incident of 12 May due to the failure of government and administration', Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 20 May, 1984)

The editorial also points out that even after the reconciliation talk initiated by the district Commissioner some Akali volunteers remain active in closing down the shops. It also calls both the communities to travel extra miles to make relations stronger. Apparently in another editorial as we read from the response of *Rojana Ajit*, *Punjab Kesri* branded the former as a mouthpiece of Akali Dal, only to elicit the following response, which relegates the latter as a loud speaker of the *Hind* Government.

What a style? On the one side it says that everything in Punjab is seen from the communal angle and then says next that the PRO Department of Punjab government is just a part of Akali Dal. But someone would ask them, why they do not accept the communal angle of the whole issue. To blame someone is very easy....this opposite press spoke against Sikhs community for *Hind* government and is a loud speaker of the government cell.

('Do Mercy on Punjab Now', Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 20 May, 1984)

The allegation of communalization of violence following the murder pushed the murder of Romesh Chander into the background and thus became an open political battle between these media houses up in their arms. The debate made *Rojana Ajit* to invoke the history of Punjabi *Suba* movement (PSM) in its own understanding and ridiculed the double standards of the *Hind Samachar* group in understanding communalization with their selective prudence, apart from their understanding about nationalism and claims to true nationalism.

We could not stop laughing after reading the news that now everything is seen from a communal angle. Now can you tell us from your heart that who made the language a communal issue in 1948? Who attached the Punjabi *Suba* issue with Akalis communal orientation? This was not a language issue, who said that Punjabi language is the language of only Sikhs and pure Punjabi Hindus speaks Hindi....Who is communal? Who are crying that communalization has come to Punjab? They think themselves true and fully religious and nationalist. If there is loss of Hindus then give compensation and when compensation is demanded for the burned shops of Sikhs, then it is communalization. Is it what is called true nationalism?' (Ibid).

The *Punjab Kesri* could not understand the logic of imposing curfew in the city following the murder and mob violence as it prevented many concerned to participate in the funeral of Romesh Chander. The appeal of the media group was not heeded and police allegedly stopped people from attending the cremation that had taken place on 13 May, which was recollected by the newspaper in its editorial on 20 May, 1984.

After postmortem, we received the dead body of Romeshje and then we wanted to cremate the body with all rituals and due respects. We requested the administration to relax the curfew for two to three hours so that we can give a proper last journey to the departed soul and a fitting funeral. But the administration didn't allow this and we decided to cremate the body in the *Hind Samachar* Ground without a procession as we did not want to create problem for the administration. It was also a shock that police did not allow to people to come to *Hind Samachar* Ground for attending the cremation. Not even least relaxation was conceded by the administration....Thousand of

brothers and sisters shed their tears indoors.

(‘Last Journey’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 20 May, 1984)

The newspaper also complained that the situation remained unchanged for the *Bhog* ceremony too. The people were also apparently prevented from participating in the *Asthi Kalash Yatra* from Jalandher and Haridwar.

On his *Bhog* program, state didn’t relaxed curfew and people had to remain in their houses. So with the small gathering at the cremation ground, we collected the mortal remains in an urn. The plan was to carry the urn of Romeshje’s mortal remains from Jalandher to Haridwar. We requested permission of the administration so that people remained absent in the cremation ceremony can take part in it.... They assured us that they will think on this issue with humanity but on that day, there was not any relaxation in the curfew. Administration thought from their point of view and people missed the chance to join the final journey of their revered partner in good and bad times (Ibid).

The newspapers also felt that because of this attitude after every terrorist attack including that of Romesh Chander, the families of the dead were not allowed to give a fitting farewell to the innocent departed. The editor warns that the situation is grave that everyone would be forced to cremate the diseased in their own home itself.

There is news in today’s newspapers that those families of eight businessmen of Jagraun who were killed on 24th May, 1984 by terrorists, were not permitted to carry their dead bodies to the cremation ground. As a result, 7 bodies were cremated at Jagraun *Mandi* and the dead body of Sandeep Kumar taken by his parents to Delhi. It is important to note that after the killing, curfew has been imposed for 37 hours in that area and police didn’t taken the dead bodies to the hospital for postmortem, instead the doctors were called to *Annaj Mandi* for the postmortem....What a pity that people on whom curfew should imposed are moving freely and escaping the custody of police and only innocent people are suffering out of the curfew. The morale of the police is so low that the bodies of people gunned down by terrorists, are not given proper rituals and people are forced to

cremate them in the houses. What we have warned at the time of Romeshje's cremation is proven true. Along with innocent people are dying in terrorist attacks, there will be new funeral grounds coming into existence in Punjab. There is one funeral ground in every small city and two to three in big city.

(‘These New Cremation Grounds’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 27 May, 1984)

On 18th May *The Tribune* published an article written by the prominent journalist Kuldip Nayar entitled ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’, which captures the prevailing situation in Punjab as exemplified by the killing of Romesh Chander. Describing the latter as one of the most courageous journalist, Nayar expresses his concern in being Punjab becoming nothing short of a slaughter house.

We in Punjab are India's hostages.” This is what Romesh Chander, who was gunned down in Jalandher last week, said while talking to me in Delhi a few days ago. He sounded helpless. I find the same poignancy in his last editorial in which he said: “nobody knows whose turn will come next.....the entire Punjab has become a slaughter house...That he was to be the next target he did not know but he did know that he could be a target. Remaining true to his profession and saying what he believe was right, he ran the risk of being killed. In our fraternity he was one of the most courageous; he did not flinch from expressing his views fearlessly even in the face of repeated threats.

(‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’, Article, *The Tribune*, 18 May, 1984)

Nayar also indicates to the reason that possibly led to the killing of Chander as he had been working towards a settlement between Akali Dal and the government of India, which might have angered the militants who apparently did not want to buy a negotiated peace within the framework of Indian nation. He also cautions the central government the growing feeling of antipathy against it as it is unable to protect innocent people. The situation is such that the public anger is more on government than on the terrorist. He also points that the murder also should make the Akali Dal to shed its ambivalence, due to which it lost considerable ground, for more constructive and bold steps to tackle the problem.

I know that Romesh Chander had supported the genuine demands of the Akalis Dal and in Delhi (through press meeting) he had appealed to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Home Minister to arrive at a settlement with the Akalis. May be, the terrorists struck as they had done in the past-because the air was once again thick with reports of conciliatory gesture from the government as well as Akalis....Besides the police, the murder of Romesh has lessons for the Congress (I). If it had any electoral advantage in view, it has disappeared because of the feeling that Mrs. Gandhi's government does not work. Anger is mounting-more against the administration than against the terrorists! The opposition parties which have been inactive since the breakdown of the tripartite talks, have left only few supporters in Punjab because since they have not been successful to produce tangible results....There is also a lesson for the moderate Akalis leaders. They have seldom shown sufficient boldness and have preferred to make a compromise with extremists....they should appear to be dividing the *Panth* or lagging behind the extremists in pursuing 'the just demands of the Sikhs'. This was their own line when the slogan "Sikhs are a separate Nation" was released or when the questions of article 25 of the constitution and a personal law for the Sikhs were brought up. They have always surrendered before joining the actual battle. No wonder they have lost considerable ground (Ibid).

That remained a lone voice! Kuldip Nayar has been pained in the loss of his courageous friend, but more importantly he dealt the incident with care to suggest all the concerned that the situation is grave and concerted effort is needed to crack a lasting solution. The voice has been much conciliatory than that of the Tribune editorial itself, which cautioned the government that the incident should not divert it from its ongoing attempts of finding solutions through negotiation. *Rojana Ajit* and *Punjab Kesri* on the other hand, used the murder of Romesh Chander largely to settle their scores and advance their ideological and communitarian positions they have already taken. The verbal war they unleashed around the violence and looting after the murder made the murder and the real issues it imply insignificant and foregrounded the communal undercurrents of the issue at a moment when restraint was

a pivotal requirement. The murder has become an issue of representational battle and political utterances.

Chapter-4

Divided Mediascape: Divergence, Silence and Reiteration

The news reporting of the newspapers being studied here shows difference in content which is driven by their respective intents. The incidents of violence and destroying of public property, attempts made by the militants to draw public attention or as retaliation measures, are reported in the manner in which they wanted the story reaching the people. They take their own positions regarding the perpetrators of such incidents as shown by the reporting of incident of breaking of the Bhakra canal discussed in this chapter. The chapter then proceeds to the voice of the media after the Operation Blue Star and the alterations and reiterations it underwent. The tones and utterances of *Rojana Ajit* seems to have underwent change to be much more moderate, whereas the other newspapers hardened their stance by legitimizing the state action by constructing grids of justification.

Stories of Differences: Reporting from Set Positions

The newspapers under the study often look at events through their own optics and report them from their own set positions. As a result, the same incident engenders different meanings to the readers. Throughout the period of militancy such 'positioned' reporting has fragmented the connotation of the incident in the public sphere and the 'truth' of the incident is lost in contradictory representation. An instance that falls under the period of our analysis would be the incident of breaking the Bhakra canal.³⁶ The breach of the canal was found on 21 July, after one and a half months of the Operation Blue Star. In the context of militancy every incident of this kind would be seen in relation to prevailing situation. But the reporting of *Rojana Ajit* is found to be very 'neutral' and they did not see any *atvadi* hands in the incident. Instead, referring to the government sources made a safe reporting that

³⁶ Bhakra Canal starts from Bhakra Nangal Dam inaugurated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This project is designed on River Satluj by Sir Louis Dane. The actual work started in April 1952 and in October 1958, first time water released through the canal. http://bbmb.gov.in/english/history_nangal_dam.asp [Accessed on 15 May, 2012]. The canal starts from Bhakra Dam and water supplied through link canals to Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab in different percentage of share as per the agreement. This agreement is known as Bhakra Nangal Agreement, 1959 <http://waterresources.rajasthan.gov.in/4bhakra.htm> (Ibid). The main line length is around 164 km out of which 159 km falls in Punjab. <http://pbirrigation.gov.in/canalsystem.html> (Ibid). During two times, big breach occurred in June and July, 1984. 'Canal Breach Again', Editorial, *The Tribune*, 23 July, 1984

deshtmands are behind the incident. Its story on 22 July under the title 'Big Breach in Bhakra Canal near Chamkor Sahib' many villages caught in water' is revealing.

Today morning, a big breach occurred in Bhakra Main Line Canal in village *Dugri Kalan* near Chamkor Sahib (Dist. Ropar). The breach is around 2000 feet wide and on the right side of the village. After the breach, canal water entered into many nearby villages too. According to latest information, the Punjab Super passage and the defense walls are declining and efforts are on to save the important Super passage; otherwise the state would loss 50 Crores. According to the police sources, one village has been drowned into 8 feet deep water and still it is unclear how much breach has occurred in the canal. According to government sources, this is a big breach and there is doubt that *deshtmands* are behind this work. The place of incident is near to the last times breach.

('Big Breach in Bhakra Canal near Chamkor Sahib', News, *Rojana Ajit*, 22 July, 1984)

The *Punjab Kesri* on the other hand had no doubt that it was an act of *ugarvadis* who broke the canal and register its concerns in the continuation of such incidents. It points out that the canal is the lifeline of Haryana and the last incident of canal break has costed the state dearly as almost for a month without adequate drinking water and due to the stoppage of supply cotton cultivation in an area of 1.5 lakhs hectors were dried out.

The canal is the lifeline of Haryana and the last incident of canal break has coasted the state dearly as almost for a month without adequate drinking water and cotton cultivation in an area of Rs. 1.5 Lac hectors were dried out. *Ugarvadis* once again broke the Bhakra canal in village *Dugri Kalan* near Chamkor Sahib in district Ropar today morning and according to police sources the water has reached into nearby villages and a village is deep into 8 feet high water level. On 6 June, on a short distance, this canal was having another breach of 1600 feet and which has filled on 15 July this month after spending of 1.5 Crores. After breach, there is shortage of water occurred in Haryana, Chandigarh and Punjab....This canal is known as a life line of Haryana with the help of this, as large area of Haryana is watered. The area remained dried for one month after the breach in same canal last time. Due

to this, cotton cultivation in about 1.5 Lakh hectare areas got seriously affected wherever the crop has been sowed; it is dying due to the lack of water.

(‘Ugarvadi Once Again Broke Bhakra Canal’, News, *Punjab Kesri*, 22 July, 1984)

The Tribune was also quite sure that it was an act of the terrorists. Referring, to the district authorities it subscribed to the view that it was an attempt of sabotage in its story under the title ‘Big breach in Bhakra Canal’. Unlike its counterparts under the study it found breach in both sides of the canal. The news story also hints at an intelligence input warning the district administration breach of this kind.

Terrorist made a wide breach in the Bhakra mainline canal near the Siswan super passage, 12 km from here, this morning, by the evening the breach widened to 600 feet on the right side and 450 feet on the left side of the canal....The district authorities who suspect it to be a case of sabotage have registered a case under the canal act...The cut first noticed around 6 am by Mr. Gurmet Singh, a *beldar* (a post of watchman type to vigil canal). He immediately informed the Bhakra mainline canal authority....Only yesterday the water level in the canal was raised to its full capacity of 11, 250 cusecs. According to police sources, the intelligence authorities had warned the district administration about the expected breach a few days ago....Security forces were advised to permanently post guards at certain vulnerable points along the canal. This was one of the vulnerable points. No guards were posted here. According to official source, a patrol party did not notice anything unusual on the super passage at 4 a.m. the patrolling by the Army and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) continues.

(‘Big breach in Bhakra Canal’, News, *The Tribune*, 22 July, 1984)

The other news published on the same day under the title ‘Haryana Dismayed’ carries the distress the whole incident caused to Haryana. It also connected the incident with post-Operation Blue Star retaliation attempts with an attempt of sabotaging the *Kar seva* at the golden temple.

The dismay and distress in Haryana which the latest cut in the Bhakra Mainline canal has caused can be imagined from the fact that the full

complement of water release in the canal day before yesterday has not reached the tail end in Sirsa when the second sabotage occurred close to the spot where a 1600 feet breach was caused on the night the Army mounted its Operations Blue Star in the Golden Temple complex on June 6. Observers note that the new act of sabotage has come in the wake of the launching of *Kar seva* by Baba Sant Singh, the *Nihang* chief.

(‘Haryana Dismayed’, News, *The Tribune*, 22 July, 1984)

Subsequently, *the Tribune* reported that ten people are rounded up by the police in connection with the incident.³⁷ More importantly, it published an editorial on 23 July ‘Canal Breach Again’ expresses its concerns over the continuation recurring of such incidents, third in a row in a gap of 45 days. It described the incident as an attempt to paralyze human life offering tremendous suffering for people in Haryana, Chandigarh and Punjab. It also pointed that the perpetrators of this crime are definitely not the friends of the farming community, arguably a message to the Jat Sikh community from whom mostly the militants allegedly hailed from. It saw it an attempt on the part of the terrorists to obstruct the process of normalization in Punjab. The editorial also used this incident to criticize the demand for withdrawing the army from Punjab and argue a case for an extended stay.³⁸

Shaken or Emboldened? Press after the Operation Blue Star

The Operation Blue Star was also coincided by an 11 days long media gag, apparently fearing hostile press, particularly those influential in rural Punjab. The media blackout throughout the Punjab resulted in widespread doubt regarding the official stories and aided the promotion of hearsay and rumor, which eventually proved to be very costly for the government. All the international and national journalist available in Amritsar at that point time were reportedly evacuated from the state. The media blackout was arguably accompanied by attempts to domesticate and silence unsympathetic press. *Rojana Ajit* for instance has significantly toned down itself either by succumbing to the statist repression or by practical considerations of restraint at an obviously apparent crisis situation. The newspaper,

³⁷ ‘Ten Round Up for The Canal Breach’, News, *The Tribune*, 23 July, 1984

³⁸ ‘Canal breach again’, Editorial, *The Tribune*, 23 July, 1984

which sympathizes with the statist positions on the issue, on the other hand, has travelled extra miles to justify the army action in the golden temple, which was proved to be a major military miscalculation considering the casualties of both the soldieries and the civilians.

The 'mediascape' of Punjab, as pointed out already, was acrimonious with allegations and counter-allegations making the situation quite tense. Responding to the allegation of *Punjab Kesri* that it is promoting communitarian sentiments, *Rojana Ajit* shot back by alleging that "the opposite press speaks against Sikh community in favor of Hind Government and has been a loud speaker of government cell" However, *Ajit's* editorial after the Operation Blue Star carries a feeling of helplessness though it did protest against the "painful" incident and its editor surrendered the honor of Padam Shri. It does not blame anyone for the "sad incident" as it is not sure who is at fault for the occurrence of it. In another article he has written that

What occurred in Durbar Sahib Complex is an incident which would be always remembered in history. Whoever is faulty and whatever the situation under which it happened and whatever occurred, the incident would give pain to not only the Sikhs but every wise man in the society. After the ban, when *Ajit* started rolling on first day we printed a design on 1st and 3rd page without printing anything else on those pages, which reflects our sorrow over the sad incident. On the second day some of our friends in the profession expressed their disagreement to it. But it was just an expression of our painful heart and it has nothing to do with the agitation and it is not a reflection of our agitated mind either. I do not wish to offer any reply to those who disagreed with what we did. In deep pain if this sad incident I returned my honor Padam Shri.

('What is the benefit of such discussion-sorrow over incidents occurred in Durbar Sahib', Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 21 June, 1984)

The editorial also indirectly endorse the governmental position of the 'sad' incident when it subscribes to the emotional speech of the President of India and suggests that he is in deep sorrow and is filled with mourns over the incident. At a moment of high emotions it translates the remorse as that of the whole nation. The question

now is what *Giyani* je [President of India] said in his speech? He started his speech with these words.

“My fellow countrymen! I am addressing you at this time with my heart full with sorrow and agony.” His words shows that whoever is responsible and whatever occurred at Durbar Sahib, his heart is filled with mourns and pains. He was not speaking as a Sikh but as the President of India. (Ibid)

Rojana Ajit also express its concern about the poor message the state of things at golden temple in the aftermath of the operation can send to the rural Punjab.

According to the PTI news 120 villages *Panchayat* Members from different parts of Punjab has gone to Durbar Sahib for *darshan*. They were together at Chandigarh then reached Amritsar by plane. After seeing Durbar Sahib in the present form what thoughts would have crossed their mind and what impression they will give to their respective villages. It is a wish and prayer of each Sikh heart that they do *darshan* and bath at Durbar Sahib without any restriction and control. In this regard, *Giyani Kripal Singh* told that they are trying it to fulfill it.

(‘Wish’, Editorial Note, *Rojana Ajit*, 21 June, 1984)

Its voice become so conciliatory when it admits that the issue is complex everyone should deal the same with care. It clearly indicates how debates without restrain and maturity can bring more harm.

Issue of Punjab is more complex now that to solve this everyone has to care more. The situation is become such that whenever a person or group took a step, same time that step came under fire of statements.

(‘Issue of Punjab is more complex’, Article, *Rojana Ajit*, 28 June, 1984)

Different from this, *The Tribune* right from the beginning of its re-publication after Operation Blue Star sounded quite emboldened and did not hesitate to go aggressive in its language. The editorial written on 16 June, the day on which it resumed publication in Punjab, Prem Bhatia, its editor, articulated the government’s positions well in an attempt to drive the point home that the military action was inevitable due to the terrorist activities. As part of a delegation of journalists visited Amritsar, under the government sponsorship, Prem Bhatia was more than

convinced that the military action was to flush out “a large force of armed militants’ who “inspired and guided” violence outside and turned the holy city of Amritsar a pitiable place which would fill the minds of visitors “with sorrow, anger and disgust.” He was convinced that army was fought heavily from inside and he could identify at least “a dozen of vantage points from which the troops were shot at, killed and wounded.”

Terrorist activities especially over the past one year followed by the army operation to flush out of the Golden Temple a large force of armed militants who inspired and guided violent action outside have turned Amritsar into a city which fills the visitor with sorrow, anger and disgust. Some 40 journalists Indian and foreign, were conducted from Delhi by a chartered Indian Airlines Boeing 747 by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to take their first look at the holy city and Durbar Sahib after the army went into action 10 days ago....One need no further evidence of the severe fighting put up by those inside the premises after a quick view of dozen of vantage points from which the troops were shot at, killed and wounded.’

(‘A Painful Visit’, Editorial, *The Tribune*, 16 June, 1984)

In another significant centre page article entitled ‘Punjab: The Inside Story’ published on 19 June and written by scholar Inderjit. The details of Bhindranwale secessionist and anti-national plans are described. The editorial was convinced that the sources of information to the government were authentic and plan of the militant leader was to create a separate Sikh state with an intention of repeating 1947 in which the Hindus would be driven out of Punjab on the one hand and bring Sikhs elsewhere in India back home on the other.

Information is now available from authoritative sources in regard to the circumstances that ultimately compelled the government to call the army in to assist the civil authority in Punjab. Topmost among the factors that weighted with the government was the authentic knowledge. It had of a diabolical plan carefully hatched by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to achieve his secessionist and antinational goals of carving out a separate Sikh state. He wanted his followers to repeat 1947 and the monstrous carnage to drive Hindus out of Punjab and bring Sikh into the State from

elsewhere in India.

(‘The Inside Story’, Article, *The Tribune*, 19 June, 1984)

The article indicates that meticulous planning has gone in from the side of Bhindranwale and his group in order to materialize his subversive intentions. The militant leader was said to be confident that the army won’t be entering the holy shrine and at best was expecting only a police or Para-military raid. It also tells the readers that Delhi has taken pains to avoid the bloody confrontation and the decision was taken with reluctance as all efforts to avoid the same have failed.

The plan was to be put through on a signal from Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Here, too, the militant Sikh leader to said to have done a lot of calculated planning which however went wrong and proved to be his undoing. Sant Jarnail Singh reckoned without Delhi and Mrs. Gandhi a capacity to take the hardest of decisions and call the army in. he thought Mrs. Gandhi should only use the ordinary police or at best the paramilitary forces-the BSF and CRPF. The centre, he was confident, would not use the Army and that the security forces would never be sent into Harimandir Sahib....Significantly, Delhi took the decision most reluctantly. In fact Mrs. Gandhi and her principal advisers tried hard to avoid it until the end. Unknown to most people, Delhi made the last ditch efforts to find a peaceful solution to the explosive issue before the Army moved in. informal but secret parleys stretching late into the night were held barely some 48 hours ago earlier between the centre and Akali Dal emissaries (Ibid).

The *Punjab Kesri* found the army action praise worthy and a necessary step for ensuring communal harmony in the state. Its editorial on 17th June describe the situation in Punjab continues to be grim and in fear of a militant backlash advocates the need for the army to stay back. It sees possibilities of militants scattered after the military operations regrouping themselves for further strike on the people. Citing PTI news it also emphasis the ‘foreign hand’ angle when it said that the militants who fled received a warm welcome in Pakistan. Out of fear of a counterattack or for seeing the militancy purged out completely, it continued its insistent disposition against the militants and their alleged supporters.

To make situation normal and make communal harmony stronger, the steps taken by the administration and the army are ultimately very welcome without any doubt and praiseworthy too and the people of Punjab are feeling relieved. Relaying of *kirtan* from Shri Harimandir Sahib and as well as Durbar Sahib of Tarantaran Sahib have started and they are now opened for devotes. Apart from this, day curfew in Punjab has been taken off from most of the Punjab, printing of newspapers resumed and all government and public offices are already opened. Now the news comes that all the four universities of Punjab that could not conduct the examination this year would probably start the same in July itself....When the situation is becoming normalized, we are happy about it, but we should not forget that still there is need to keep more vigil and alert under the compelling conditions in the state. There are reports that still a few groups are waiting for a chance to strike and they are silent for the time being just because of the army. According to the news given by Press Trust of India, a few shady people cross the border and reached Pakistan where they all are welcomed very warmly. Pakistan Radio and Television is in full swing to add the fuel to the fire. With them, the BBC London has also put oil in the fire by relaying an interview of Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan type people.³⁹ The British government however, apologized for the same incident, but we have to wait and see what would be in store in the future.

(‘Still Need More Alert’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 17 June, 1984)

The Tribune also published articles which supports the foreign hand theory- particularly that of Pakistan. For instance, the article written on 25 June by K.R

³⁹ Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan was the founder of the *Khalistan* movement that sought to create an independent Sikh state. Chauhan, a Sikh Jaat from the Chauhan clan, grew up in Tanda in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district. A medical practitioner, Dr. Chauhan was first elected to the Punjab Assembly from the Tanda as a candidate of the Republican Party of India in 1967. He became Deputy Speaker when the Akali Dal led coalition Government took office in Punjab and he became Finance Minister. In 1969, after losing Assembly elections, he moved to United Kingdom in 1971 and same year he went to Nankana Sahib in Pakistan to try to set up Sikh government. Then he visited to USA to meet with supporters. In Oct, 1971, he placed an advertisement in the *New York Times* proclaiming an Independent Sikh state. In 1977, he returned to India and then migrated to Britain in 1979. In London, Chauhan established an organization "Khalistan National Council". He also came in contact with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and with many other organizations in Canada, the USA and Germany. He declared himself president of the "Republic of *Khalistan*", issued *Khalistan* passports, postage stamps and *Khalistan* dollars. He died in April, 2007 at his native village Tanda in Hoshiarpur. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagjit_Singh_Chauhan. [Accessed on 19 June, 1984]

Sunder Rajan has concluded that militants received the arms from Pakistan and China. The article also finds an active role of CIA in the whole militancy.

Pakistan has been specifically and repeatedly mentioned as the main source from which sophisticated arms flowed into the arsenals of the terrorists. Reference has also been made to other foreign powers. The Pakistan authority has denied that they had any links with the trouble makers in Punjab. But no one believes them. Modern weapons with Pakistani and Chinese markings could not have been smuggled across the frontier only by professional gun runners and criminals...we have been hearing about a foreign hand in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir for many years. Surely some evidence - howsoever marginal could have been found. According to what Mrs. Gandhi told the BBC, the CIA is active in a number of countries and there is no reason to think that it is not active in India. She also confessed that the Government of India did not have the sophisticated equipment so necessary to find out the extent of the accumulation of arms in the Golden Temple....The CIA is also known to be active in India.

(‘No Longer a Suspicion’, Article, *The Tribune*, 25 June, 1984)

In contrast, writing more than a month after the Operation Blue Star, *Rojana Ajit* felt that the withdrawal of army from the golden temple premises is necessary for getting things back to normalcy in Punjab. It lambasts at the editor of *The Tribune* who suggested the opposite and whom it doubts advising the central government in the same line. The newspaper, without directly targeting the central government takes a safe route of attacking the editor of another newspaper for misguiding the government.

It looks like that Shri Prem Bhatia now a days is lesser a correspondent and more an advisor. He is someone who is giving positive advices to the Prime Minister and her government, in lieu of which he can get one seat or not we cannot say anything on this. Shri Prem Bhatia wrote regular editorials on the issues of Punjab and Kashmir. In these articles, he did not left any chance in praising Smt. Gandhi in all possible manner. He also apparently gave some suggestions on Punjab problem too.....From all sides the demand is gaining ground that the army should quit from the *Hari Mandir* Sahib and all the management of the Golden Temple should be transferred to the SGPC. But

on this issue of the management of Shri *Hari Mandir* Sahib, Shri Bhatia has given a wrong advice. We feel that if the government moves according to this advice, definitely the position will be worsened.

(‘Wrong Talking Are Dangerous’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 11 July, 1984)

The *Punjab Kesri* criticized the demand for withdrawing the army from the Golden Temple and from Punjab and often cited Major General Brar’s statement that situation is not fully danger free as ‘terrorists’ are still working in small groups across the state and that the life of even the *Granthis* of Golden Temple and Akal Takht are under threat forcing the army to give them a security cover.⁴⁰ It confronts the Akali leaders who demanded for the withdrawal of army by citing the statement of the army and the Home Minister that army won’t stay even a single extra day in Punjab if its presence is not needed for upholding peace.⁴¹ The *Punjab Kesri* also attempts at a postmortem of things at the critical point in time and blame SGPC for its inability to prevent the holiest shrine of the Sikhs fallen into the hand of militants.

SGPC itself has not fulfilled its responsibilities to maintain the work of Guru’s home. This is not only mentioned by the government but also the voice of the opposition parties too. If SGPC responsibly pay off the duties then it was not possible for Bhindranwale to succeed in control of Akal Takht. The sad incident occurred in Punjab that would not have happened and the need of white paper which Centre Government issued on Operation would not have arisen.

(‘To Akali Leaders’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 15 July, 1984)

Rojana Ajit’s take on the White Paper issue by the government of India has been euphemistic if not critical.⁴² It reflects the constraints of expressing scathing

⁴⁰ ‘Still Need of More Alert’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 17 July, 1984

⁴¹ ‘The situation in Punjab is becoming normal and many leaders and think tanks of the society are demanding to call off the army. Today two retired army officers Lt. Gen Arora and Lt. Gen Sinha demanded to call back the army. In this context army officers said that without any need, army will not stay an extra day in Punjab and also Home Minister Mr. P.C Sethi promised this that army will not spent a single day in Punjab without a reason. ‘To Akali Leader’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 15 July, 1984

⁴² The Centre Government issued white paper on OBS on July 1984. In which they in serial described the incidents occurred in Punjab and also justifies the Operation Bluestar with different reasons. The main aim of issuing white paper is to condemn the role of militants and clear the stand of government.

discontent but resort to disdain and sarcasm. At the same time it was convinced that the White Paper made in such way to justify the army action in the holy shrine. The editorial is written on this also lists the arguments of the government in terms of national security, communal harmony and subversive challenges from across the border.

This whitepaper issued by government virtually is a beautiful and long list of intelligently set incidents which occurred during last two years. This paper is prepared with the help of news cuttings putting strategically. It becomes necessary to congratulate government on what is being lined up and feel good about combination of cuttings. It was indispensable to justify the army action and was proved right with complete success. It has been also explained that *atvadis* were running a parallel government inside Durbar Sahib complex. It is said that under the leadership of Bhindranwale, *atvadis* had begun the violence at large scale. After the decision of strike taken by Akali Dal to halt the general life of public in state, a danger arisen for cut off of border state Punjab from rest of the country had arisen. It had been explained that there were two aims of army action. It was to control *deshtpasands* and communal violence, to provide safety for people and establish normal situation in Punjab and Chandigarh. Second make strengthen the vigilance over Indi-Pakistan border and prohibit smuggling and trespassing.

(‘Listen Up Voice of Heart’, Editorial, *Rojana Ajit*, 12 July, 1984)

The same editorial also points its fingers back to the government for its failure to control the militants as they were gaining hold in Punjab. According to the government a series of events starting from 20 March 1981 to 2 June 1984 cumulatively contributed to the Operation Blue Star. The newspaper raise this question that what made the government to allow the mobilization of arms and escalating violence to go unchecked for more than three years leading to a bloody battle within the holiest shrine of the Sikhs.

According to white paper, the primary purpose to launch army action in Punjab and Chandigarh was to control *deshtpasands* and communal violence, to provide safety for the people and establish peaceful situation. The incidents which occurred, among those in given list of white paper, the

first incident is of 20 March, 1981 and the last incident is of 2 June, 1984. This reveals that government kept on bearing all those incidents for more than three years which they have written in their list as violent incidents and have been placed in the list considering these incidents due to which the army action had been thought to be necessary. A question arises that what were those reasons which not allowed the government for three years to stop smuggling of arms and highhanded acts of bloodshedThe question arises that Sant Bhindranwale has been staying in Punjab for 4-5 years. Armed *Sewadars* were always present besides him. He returned from Bombay after a long stay and there he remained travelling with this armed *Sewadars*. He went to Delhi for two times and even ministers bowed to his feet. Special arrangements for his security had been made by Delhi and government never issued any statement against him (Ibid).

The *Punjab Kesri* continued its frontal attack on Akali leadership for its double game in the Sikh militancy. It alleges that the same Akali branded Bhindranwale as a stooge of the Congress, later allowed him makes the golden temple his safe shelter. Once the recalcitrant militant went out of control, the Akali leadership under Sant Longowal agitated against his presence in vain.

Akali leadership insistently proclaimed that Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale is Indira Congress man. Romeshje wrote repeatedly if this is really so then why Akalis have given shelter to Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale in Durbar Sahib and why were they helping him and followed him blindly. They themselves becoming a puppet in his hands, why are blaming Indira Congress. But Akalis were not having any answer of these questions. Sant Longowal raised a strong protest against the presence of Bhindranwale in Durbar Sahib and threatened self immolation on this issue bit these things had no effect on Akali leadership.

(‘To Akali Leadership’, Editorial, *Punjab Kesri*, 15 July, 1984)

The newspaper also criticizes the decision of Akali Dal to send *Shaeedi Jathas* in an attempt to force the government of India to withdraw army from the state in general and from the golden temple in particular. *Punjab Kesri* felt that such pressure tactics would only worsen the situation as it is not advisable for the army

to recede without completing their mission. Instead, such explosive debates, it felt that the time is ripe for constructive work of bridging the healing the Community relationship by promoting united *Kar seva* of both Hindus and Sikhs to renovate the damaged golden temple.

Prime Minister took this ultimatum of Akali Dal seriously to send Martyr groups by doing this; Akalis have not shown the intelligence to understand the becoming situations and act sensibly. During normalization of situation, the actions have been taken by security forces throughout Punjab, till now the arms are being recovered. Government cannot allow in any condition to repeat the earlier history.... Although Akali leaders don't like to listen to us yet we would like to tell them for their own and state benefit that they should act judiciously and don't commit such an act which may become a hurdle in the path of normalizing the situations. After immediate shunning of present program of sending *Shaeedi Jathas*, they should cooperate in producing such situations which may help in starting *Kar seva* in Golden Temple. The Hindus and Sikhs come unitely may normalize the conditions of Punjab and once again Punjab can propel on the path of progress. If any type of political advantage they want to have from these incidents even then to do this is wrong because History cannot be washed away by this serial incidents (Ibid).

Kuldip Nayar's article in *The Tribune* on 12 July criticizes both the moderate Akali leaders, who could not prevent the growth of extremists within the community and its cadre and the government who couldn't timely intervene and prevent Bhindranwale to become a bigger problem. The Government instead waited till the situation slide into a flash point to resort to military action to bring things back to normalcy. The article, at the same time, reminds the Sikh community who are angry over the heavy military action in the golden temple that the terrorists have converted the shrine into an arsenal and their design was anti-national. It also invoked the nation of true Sikhhood and points out that such activities cannot be carried out by a true Sikh. Moreover, it also suggested that all true Sikhs have the moral responsibility of disowning anti-national and secessionist designs of the terrorists.

In their present mood of anger the Sikhs do not condemn the terrorists who collected an arsenal in the Golden Temple complex. The designs of the

terrorists were anti-national and no true Sikh can possibly condone them. If the Sikhs speak out against this, as Mr. Jiwan Singh Umrangal has done, Hindu opinion will begin to change.

(‘Alienation of Minorities’, Article, *The Tribune*, 12 July, 1984)

Nayar also called upon the Sikhs to be truly national, which belongs to ‘all of us’ and the anger of the community against the Prime Minister and her political party should not be turned out to be hostility towards the nation. Their anger also should not be turned against the Hindus and the larger interests of Punjab. It also politely suggests that a healing touch would come from the Hindus when they realize that the whole community should not be held responsible for what a few extremists did. The call to Sikhs was thus a call essentially to correct themselves and win the confidence of the Hindus.

The Sikhs must make a distinction between the Prime Minister and the nation. She represents the government and heads a party and both can do wrong; but the nation is all of us. If in their anger against her they do anything to harm the nation, they will be playing into her hands....It is what the Sikhs have guard against; their anger is against the ruling party at the centre and they should not turn it against the Hindus or harm the interests of Punjab or India. The healing touch will come from the Hindus when they realize that they should not blame the whole Sikh community for what a few extremists did (Ibid).

After calling for corrigibility from one community, as recapping analysis of the entire issue *The Tribune* published an editorial on 24 July, in which see communalization of politics that brings all such perils to the country. Due to politicization of religion and communalization of politics, it regretted, our secularism suffered serious distortions. It also makes a call for creating a genuine secularism wherein the majority and the minority have their own roles to play- respecting the sentiments of each other would be a primary requirement for achieving the same.

We have unfortunately politicized religion and communalized politics. Consequently, our secularism had suffered ugly distortions, what was worse, we had failed to implement over the past 36 years a unanimous resolution adopted by our constituent assembly on April 3, 1948, for rooting out the

cancer of communalism from India's body politics – the malaise which led to partition and the resultant holocaust.... Communalism has unfortunately continued to grow since independence despite pious platitudes mouthed ad nauseum by top leaders. Partition itself was the outcome of communal politics. One expected that communalism would die its natural death when following independence, India chose to become a secular democracy- A secular India, Nehru explained at the outset did not mean a country without religion. It only ensured the institutional separation of the state from religion – and a balanced approach to all faiths.... 'India will be able to achieve genuine secularism only if all of us join hands to eradicate communalism - weather of the majority or of the minority. Secularism cannot be a one way street. Each community must respect the sentiments of the others.'

(‘Crying Need of the Hour’, Article, *The Tribune*, 24 July, 1984)

In short Operation Blue Star, the media blackout and possibly the state repression through backdoor, has significantly toned down *Rojana Ajit's* otherwise aggressive position against the ‘Hind government’ and their supporters in the media. It called for greater cooperation between the communities and recommended collective work to renovate the damaged Durbar Sahib. The *Punjab Kesri* continued to be antagonistic towards the Akalis, though it at times calls for reconciliation and joint *Kar seva* to renovate the golden temple. It was arguing for the extension of military presence in the shrine and in Punjab as it was fearful of re-grouping of militants and counter-strike alongside finding adequate justification for the governmental action. *The Tribune*, with its nationalist credentials at best, fully endorse the enforced governmental action as all other options apparently dried out. It also called the true Sikhs to get unsympathetic to the cause of militancy and preached the imperative of being truly national and secular. It needs to be closely studied what moderated the otherwise an acrimonious mediascape after the Operation Blue Star and silencing of the media that had been once characterized by diverse reporting.

Chapter- 5

Conclusion

There is no dearth of studies on the militancy in Punjab. However, the role and involvement of the media in the movement for separate homeland for Sikhs has remained an unexplored area. This dissertation by looking at three specific newspapers and their representations of militancy during the time around the Operation Blue Star attempted to foreground the vitality of media during such moments of crisis. The study presumed that militancy and violence offers the media a crisis as well as an opportunity as media is not a politically neutral entity without its priorities and preferences in terms of business and ideology. Readers too are not neutral and autonomous and in an attempt to preserve their readership and possibly to expand it, the media houses would be taking an economically and politically conditioned position of writing according to the sentiments of their constituencies and often promoting such sentiments. It is also not possible for the media to remain neutral and silent on such conditions of prolonged militancy and violence. This often result in a situation in which the mediascape becoming a battlefield, contested and violent with differing and acrimonious positions, alongside the physical violence outside. The ideologies of violence and counter violence also seek their legitimization through their battle in the mediascape to establish their dominance in the public sphere. Though, militancy and 'terrorism' is often regarded as a stage in which formal and institutionalized channels of engagement are abandoned, the battle is found to be fought in the media in a vigorous manner as seen in the case of militancy in Punjab.

India's modernity has its own ambivalences as it represents simultaneous presence of 'modern' and 'traditional' in it. The growth of communitarian sentiments is something that went hand in hand with development of secular thinking and life. The vernacular press developed in India during the course of modernity in significant ways got organized along communitarian lines. The vernacular press in Punjab too carried this burden of history. Among the three newspapers under the study, *Rojana Ajit* largely voiced the Sikh sentiments and *Punjab Kesri* that of Hindus, while *The Tribune* shared an apparently secular and nationalist predilection. The readership of these newspapers also goes in the same line, so also their urban – rural popularity, though *Punjab Kesri* remained the most popular

in both segments. The communitarian orientation of these newspapers is quite apparent from the positions they have taken during militancy.

The manner in which the newspapers under the present study describe the militants is an important window into their set position on the issue. The categories are used conveniently in such a way to de-legitimize militancy on the one hand and guard the militants on the other. The *Punjab Kesri* was unambiguous in branding the militants as *ugravadis* and relegating their intentions as anti-national and secessionist. *The Tribune* was critical of the state for curtailing the freedom of press and promoting someone like Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, but called the militants as terrorists and had little sympathies for their cause. The language of these newspapers at its utterance, though with differences in magnitude and intensity, was very near to that of the state and that of the nationalist rhetoric. *Rojana Ajit* on the other hand not only refused to call them by a name equivalent to terrorists, but also attempted to highlight the material and religious reasons behind *atvad*, alongside the community divides created by partisan governance.

The difference in position was such that they couldn't come to a shared position even when a prominent journalist was gunned down allegedly by militants. The media representations of this murder have made the murder representationally insignificant and choose to muddle over the violence erupted subsequent to the murder and debated over it on communitarian lines while assessing causalities. The verbal war between *Rojana Ajit* and *Punjabi Kesri* unleashed around the violence and looting after the murder made the murder and the real issues it imply insignificant and foregrounded the communal undercurrents of the issue at a moment when restraint was a pivotal requirement. The murder has become a tool in their hands to advance their set positions and thereby make an already emotionally charged atmosphere more turbulent. *The Tribune* on the other hand alongside mourning the dead of their dear friend journalist, cautioned the state and the Akalis not to be carried away by the act of deterrence from the side of the militants to spoil the atmosphere for talks and peaceful negotiations.

The newspapers, being set in their positions, could see every incident through their own optic and represent them in their own way as shown by the incident of Bhakra

canal breach issue. While the *Punjab Kesri* and *The Tribune* were quick to identify that it was handiwork of terrorists, *Rojana Ajit* was not certain about the same. The latter rather presented the news in a factual manner without identifying the 'unidentified' persons/groups behind it. The editorials and articles appeared in these newspapers after the Operation Blue Star has also been significantly different – one among them looks more sober if not domesticated and the other two resorted to nationalist rhetoric. Arguably, the Operation Blue Star, the media blackout and possibly the state repression through backdoor, has significantly toned down *Rojana Ajit's* otherwise aggressive position against the 'Hind government' and their supporters in the media. It's voice become conciliatory as it called for greater cooperation between the communities. The *Punjab Kesri* on the other hand continued its antagonism towards the Akalis, though it at times calls for reconciliation and joint *Kar seva* to renovate the golden temple. It also expressed a sense of fear and argued for the extension of military presence in the shrine and in Punjab to avoid re-grouping of militants and counter-strike. Its editorials also richly provided justifications for military action, so also was the *The Tribune*. It saw the military action in the golden temple as inevitable which the government tried its level best to avoid. It also called the true Sikhs to get unsympathetic to the cause of militancy and preached the imperative of being truly national and secular. The present study being exploratory also calls for more serious academic inquiry into the role of media in creating and perpetuating a fractured public sphere over Punjab when the militants and the state were engaged in a fierce battle.

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