



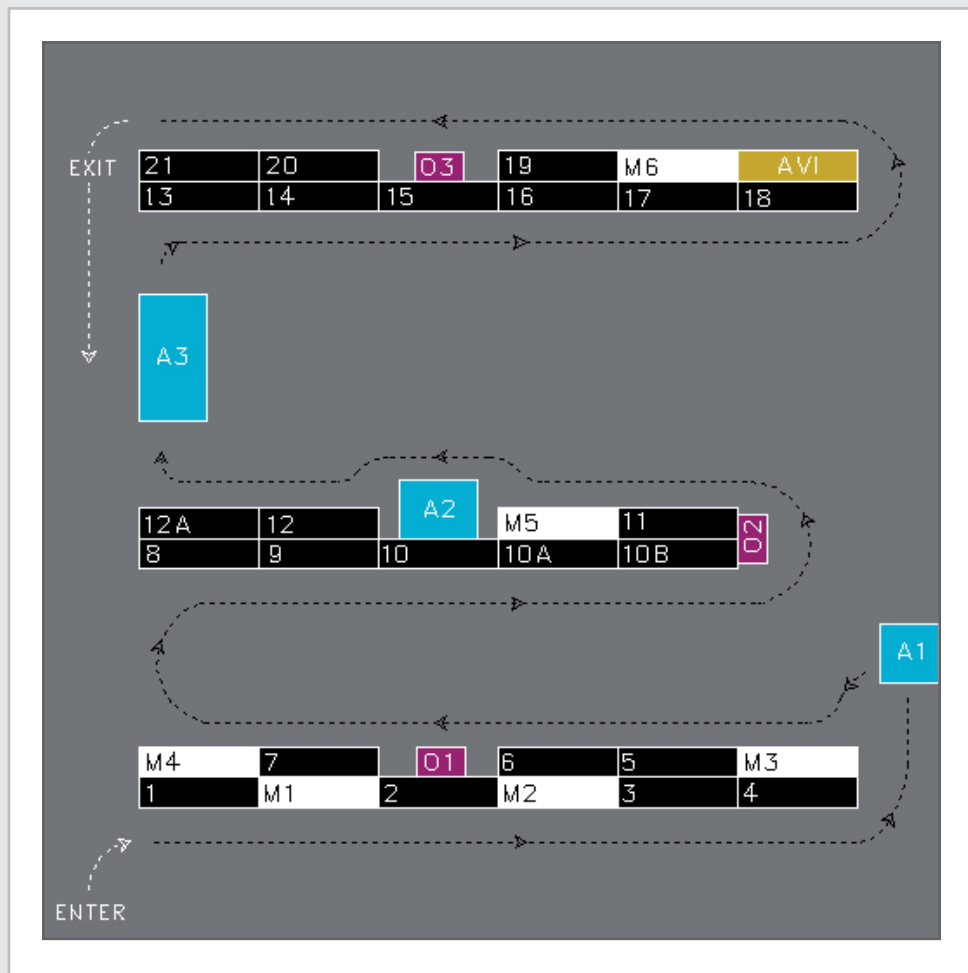
1984

Delhi

GENOCIDE

A Candle in the Dark
An Exhibition of Sikh History





- Main Exhibition Panels
- Panels Marking Significant change
- Historic Objects
- Art Pieces
- Audio Visual Panel

Welcome to A Candle in the Dark - An Exhibition of Sikh History, we hope you enjoy your visit.

This Exhibition will take you on a journey from the beginning of the Sikh Way, exploring how the philosophy of the House of Guru Nanak has often come against violent suppression.

The title for this exhibition is representative of the Ideology of Guru Nanak; for us the 'Candle in the Dark' is the Divine knowledge that the Gurus shared with their Sikhs and the world. In any revolution it is the mothers, sisters and daughters who suffer twice as much as men. The Chunni motif seen throughout is in honour of their struggle.

This Exhibition was inspired by the desire of the National Sikh Youth Federation to showcase a major aspect of our recent political history and the context in which it has developed.

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"Some riots took place in the country following the murder of Indiraji. We know the people were very angry and for a few days it seemed that India had been shaken. But when a mighty tree falls, it is only natural that the earth around it does shake a little".

Rajiv Gandhi, 19th November 1984



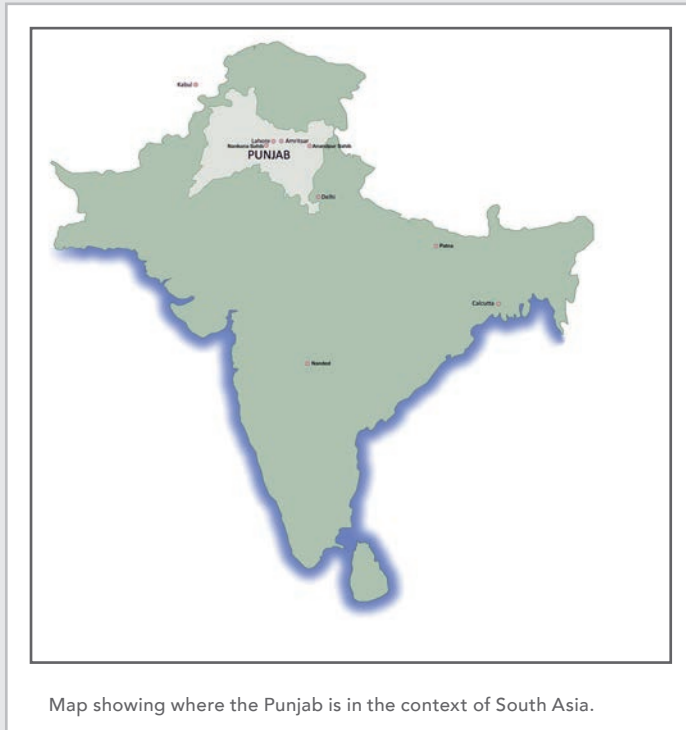
Four Sikh brothers, the owners of the burning Sahni Paints, are roasted alive by mobs in Paharganj, New Delhi, 1984

From 31st October – 3rd November in 1984, organised acts of violence were carried out against Sikhs throughout the Indian capital of Delhi as well as across the country. It is generally understood that the 'riots' were in retaliation to the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two Sikh bodyguards. However, the evidence suggests that these were neither riots, nor acts of vengeance committed in the heat of the moment. This was an orchestrated event, part of a planned annihilation of the Sikh people that had been coming for over a century and was now being implemented at an opportune moment.

This exhibition explores why Sikhs are considered to be such a threat in South Asia and reveals how the Genocide of Sikhs in Delhi was committed.

"When it is Thy Will, men wield the sword and sever the head from the neck".

Guru Nanak M.1 (Ang 145) Guru Granth Sahib



The Sikh Way of life was introduced by Guru Nanak in the 15th century. Born in the Punjab region of South Asia, shared by modern-day India and Pakistan, Guru Nanak introduced a new way for mankind to exist based on recognising that we are all part of One divine design. This is reflected in his revelation 'Ik Oankar' and formed the basis of Sikh ideology, freeing people to think for themselves and make a direct search for Truth without being restricted by caste, class or gender. Over 239 years, the House of Guru Nanak established the institutions and principles that became the foundation of this 'Niyara Panth' or New Order, regularly bringing the Sikhs into direct conflict with the existing ruling classes who controlled society. However, the Sikhs continued to remain true to the Guru and found strength in what was the culmination of Guru Nanak's revelations: the founding of the Khalsa and the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib. The moment when Guru Gobind Singh knelt down before the Panj Pyare to become a Khalsa too, is without parallel in world history and was the greatest example for mankind to realise that we are all indeed One.

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"Do not call the Sikhs 'dogs'. They are in fact lions: in the battlefield they are courageous like bold lions. How could a warrior who joins the battle roaring like a lion, be compared with a dog?"

Qazi Nur Muhammed, 'Jangnama' (Mughal Battle chronicles 1764)



A battle scene from the woods at Kahnawan during the Shotta Ghallughara, depicted by Master Gurdit Singh.

The Sikh people have suffered two Genocides early in their history. The 'lesser' Genocide - or Shotta Ghallughara - took place in March 1746 when the Mughal Governor of Lahore Yahya Khan and a Hindu Minister of the city Lakhpat Rai colluded in an attempt to annihilate the Sikhs. Their first targets were Sikh residents of Lahore who were executed indiscriminately, before significant military forces were sent out to counter a sizeable gathering of Sikhs in the woods at Kahnawaan. Some 7,000 Sikhs were killed whilst a further 3,000 were captured, taken back to Lahore and then executed.

*"When the Sikhs returned Marathi girls to their homes,
it was the greatest act of chivalry and kindness".*

Major James Brown, History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs (1788)



Sikhs saving women of all backgrounds from being carried away to Kabul, depicted by Kirpal Singh.

The second, 'greater' Genocide - or Vadda Ghallughara - took place in 1762 when the Afghan King, Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked a convoy of Sikhs travelling in the tens of thousands who were being accompanied to safety in Barnala. The Sikh guardians shielded their travelling party on both sides as best they could, but whenever their ranks were pierced, women, children and the elderly were slaughtered. Between dawn and noon, some 30,000 Sikhs were killed in the attack – almost half of the entire Sikh population at that time.

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"...he [Banda] laid down that of Hindus and Muslims, whoever became enrolled among the Sikhs, should be of one body and take their meal together so that the distinction in honour between the lowly and the well born was entirely removed and all achieved mutual unison, acting together".

Muhammed Shafi Warid, 'Mir'at-i-Waridat' (1734)

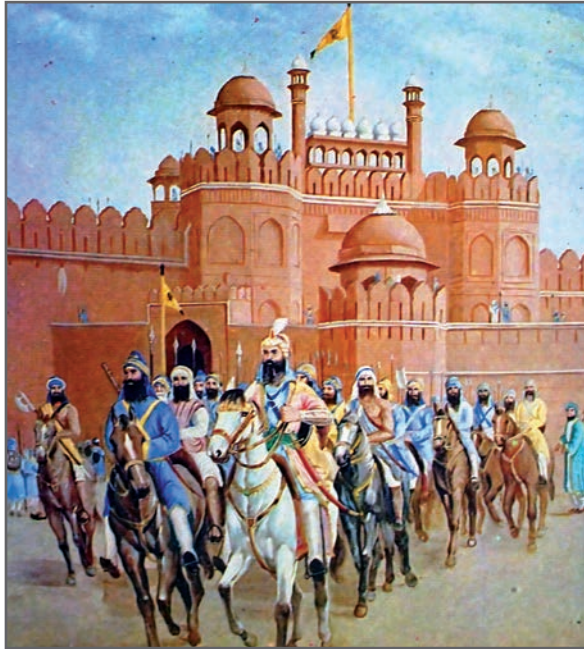


Baba Banda Singh Bahadur who led the Sikhs to create the first Khalsa Republic in 1710, depicted by Kirpal Singh.

The Mughal Empire had controlled much of South Asia since before the arrival of Guru Nanak in this World. The authority of this regime was questioned by the Gurus from the earliest opportunity and the Sikh concept of 'Halemi Raj' - a nation state built on Truth and love - was continuously pitted against the way of the dictator throughout the Guru period. It wasn't until 1710 that the Sikhs were able to assert their military authority in the Punjab and a Khalsa Republic was born under the stewardship of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. Despite proving to be a short-lived triumph, it was a vital moment for Sikhs to experience rule under Guru Granth, as the Guru Panth.

"All the Sikhs were theoretically equal and he who like Amar Singh Majithia could pierce a tree through with an arrow or like Hari Singh Nalwa could kill a tiger with a blow of his sword, might soon ride with the followers behind him and call himself a Sardar".

Lepele Griffin, 'Rajas of the Punjab' (1870)



Sardar Baghel Singh and the Khalsa forces having conquered Delhi raise the Nishan Sahib over the Red Fort, depicted by Amolak Singh.

The Mughals soon gave way to a new invader from Afghanistan - the Durrani Kings. The Sikhs regrouped into 'Misls' and divided the Punjab into smaller territories to defend from oppression. The two Sikh Holocausts of this time period came amidst repeated attempts at subjugation of the House of Guru Nanak and dilution of the New Order that had been introduced to society. But the directive to bestow Guruship to the Shabad, in the form of the Guru Granth Sahib alone, meant that then, as now, the principles of Guru Nanak could not be compromised.

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"Certain it is that there would have been a different story to tell if the body of men [Khalsa Army] had not been commanded by traitors".

Robert S Rait, 'The Life and Campaigns of Viscount Gough' (1903)



The Darbar of Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh, depicted by Kirpal Singh.

For all of his great courage and vision, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had created a hereditary monarchy that was not in-keeping with the concept of 'Halemi Raj'. After numerous battles, two major wars, treasons and betrayals the British Empire finally destabilised the Sikh Empire. The once great Sikh Empire had been relegated to history, its treasuries pillaged; its territories fragmented and after a series of devastating treaties, even the child Maharaja, Duleep Singh, was exiled to Britain. Under British rule, there was considerable corruption of Sikh ideals and practices, mostly focused on bringing Guru Nanak's 'Niyara Panth' under the umbrella of traditional dharma. In response to this, the Singh Sabha movement sought to return Sikhi to its original values, and were largely successful, due in no small part to the immutable nature of the Guru Granth Sahib.

"The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special considerations. I see nothing wrong in an area set up in the North of India wherein, the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom".

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Calcutta on 6th July, 1946



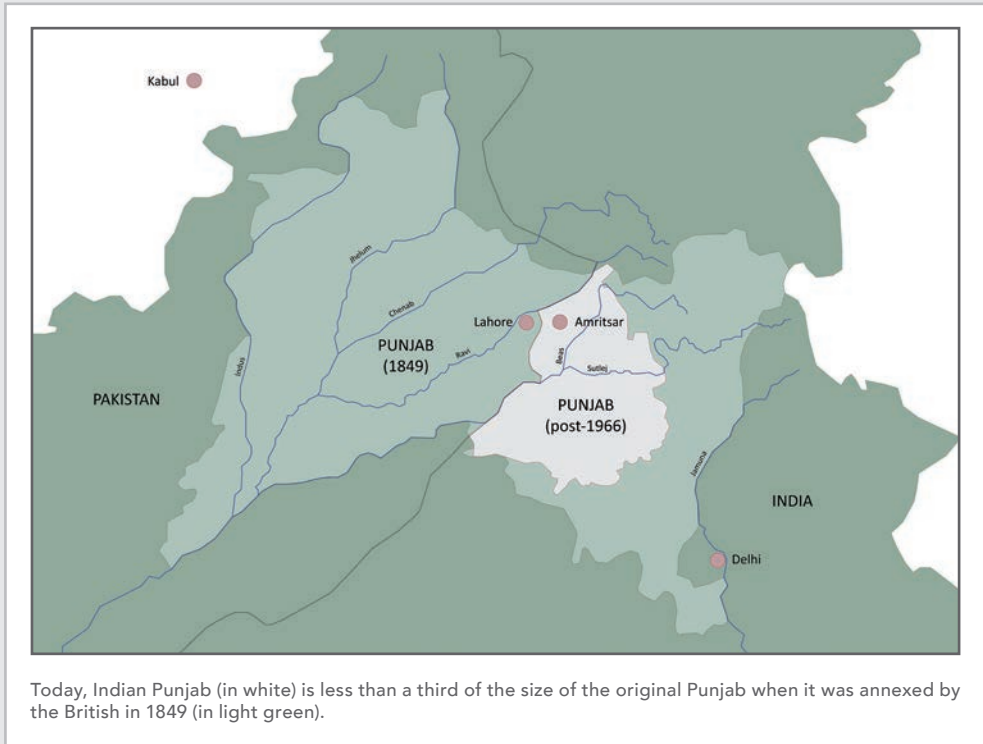
Members of the anti-Imperialist Ghadar Party pose outside the Stockton Gurdwara in California in 1912.

The Sikhs continued their battle against British Imperialism and struggled for an independent Punjab. The political elite of India convinced the Sikhs to join their wider call for Indian Independence, in return resolutions were passed that guaranteed Sikhs their autonomy in Punjab. After a long battle against British Imperialism, freedom was won in South Asia. But it did not come without a price; of the 121 prisoners sentenced to long-term imprisonment by the British, 91 were Sikhs, and of 31 executions under British rule, 27 were Sikhs. In 1947, the Sikhs were betrayed by Jawaharlal Nehru. Punjab, the land of the five rivers was divided between the newly formed India and Pakistan. An estimated 500,000 died in communal violence as people moved between West Punjab (now part of Pakistan) and East Punjab (now a part of India).

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"The Sikhs, as a community, are a lawless people and are thus a menace to the law abiding Hindus in the province. Hence they should be stringently suppressed".

Chandu Lal Trivedi, Governor of East Punjab in a secret circular 10th October, 1947



Over the next two decades, the central Government of the Indian State destabilised Punjab in a number of ways that were promoted to be to the benefit of the whole country, but were actually intended to serve the interests of the ruling classes in Delhi. Rivers were redirected and the official language was replaced. Agitations and movements to re-instate the livelihood of Punjab were launched and were partially successful, but ultimately led to a much smaller geographical State. Hundreds of Punjabi-speaking villages were left out of the new Punjab which was now less than a third of the size it was just a hundred years earlier. Punjab's capital city was declared union territory and was to be shared with the newly formed neighbouring State of Haryana.

“The political goal stated in the [Anandpur Sahib] Resolution, the Akalis pointed out, was not in itself new but a reiteration of the Akali Dal’s earlier objective, before India’s independence, to preserve and maintain the distinct and independent entity of the Panth”.

Harnik Deol, ‘Religion and Nationalism in India: The Case of the Punjab’ (2000)



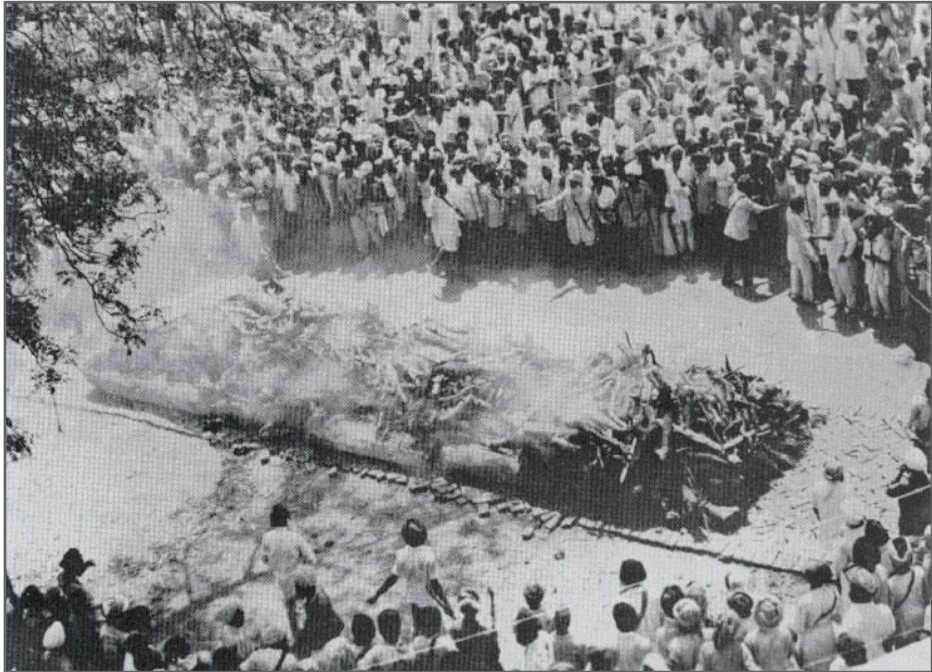
The drafter of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, Professor Kapur Singh, sits in discussion with the most vocal advocate of the Resolution, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

In 1973, a gathering of Sikh academics and leadership was called to determine how an end to the decades of struggle could be sought. The result was the drafting of Sikh demands for greater State autonomy and civil rights into a document that became known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. It was endorsed by the wide circle of thinkers, activists and leaders who had been in attendance. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution calls for a “progressive decentralisation of powers” to safeguard the fundamental rights of religious and linguistic minorities and to “pave the way for economic progress” for all the people of Punjab. It was deliberately undermined by the Indian State who wrongly propagated that it was separatist in nature.

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"Indira Gandhi wanted to weaken the Shiromani Akali Dal (which formulated the Anandpur Sahib Resolution), she thought of an elaborate plan to strengthen the Nirankari sect not only in Punjab, but throughout the country and abroad also".

The Indian Express, April 25th 1978

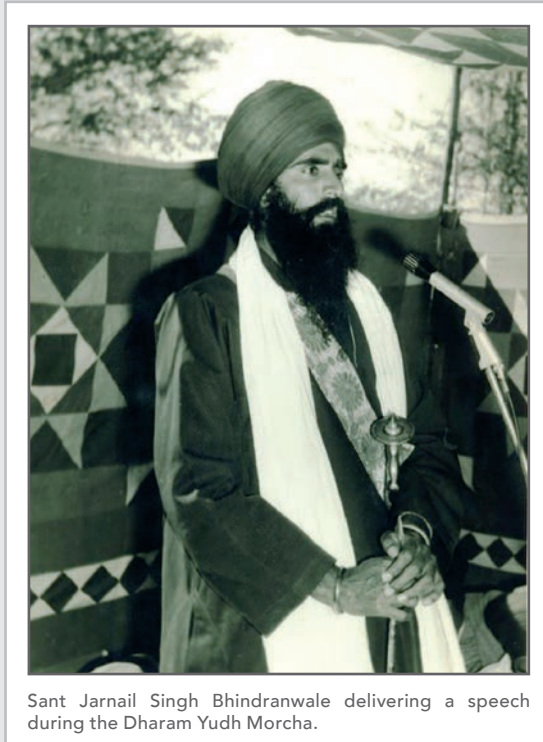


Funeral pyre of the 13 Sikhs killed protesting against heretic anti-Sikhi cult.

The Indian State commenced covert programs to set up heretic cults to counter the revival of Sikhi and political awareness in the masses. The Nirankaris were one such cult, who were committed to attacking the Sikh faith by denigrating its beloved Gurus and their teachings. The Nirankaris held a convention in Amritsar on 13th April 1978, to coincide with Vaisakhi clearly to antagonise the Sikhs. Sikhs who went to demonstrate outside the convention were attacked by thousands of Nirankaris aided by the Punjab Police, 13 Sikhs were brutally murdered. Later that year on 26th September in Kanpur and 4th November in Delhi a total of 15 Sikhs were killed in similar circumstances. These killings and the lack of justice after marked a turning point between relations of the Indian State with the Sikhs.

"When the agitation began nearly two years ago, it was led by reasonable men seeking a reasonable settlement of reasonable demands, and at least three times there were prospects of agreement at a negotiating table but each time Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sabotaged the agreement".

Kuldip Nayar, an eminent Hindu journalist in 'The Illustrated Weekly of India' July 22nd 1984



Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale delivering a speech during the Dharam Yudh Morcha.

In response to Indian State violence and to protect the people of Punjab with the enactment of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, (head of the Sikh Seminary Dam Dami Taksal) launched the Dharam Yudh Morcha on 25th July 1982. Sikhs began to peacefully protest and court arrest in groups of 50 which later increased to 500 and within a few months over 30,000 had been imprisoned. As support for the agitations increased, other methods of social disobedience were employed including mass strikes and sit-ins. In stark contrast with the conduct of the Sikh demonstrators, the Indian State's response was disproportionate, oppressive and brutal. The security forces in Punjab resorted to "unprovoked and indiscriminate firing" (The Tribune April 10, 1983).



Sikh religion in French newspaper

Tools of Genocide

A work of art exploring how genocide is committed

WHO ARE THE GUILTY ?

Report of a Joint Inquiry into the Causes and Impact of the Riots in Delhi from 31 October to 10 November

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES
1984

“ਪਾਪੀ ਪਾਪ ਕਮਾਵਦੇ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂਦੇ ਹਾਂਦੇ” ਮ: ੫

31 ਅਕਤੂਬਰ ਤੋਂ 10 ਨਵੰਬਰ 84 ਦੇ ਦਰਮਿਆਨ ਗਿਟੀ-ਮਿਥੀ ਵਿੱਚ-ਤਬੰਦੀ ਨਾਲ ਦਿੱਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਗਏ ਕਤਲੇਆਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਪੁੱਛ ਪਤਤਾਲ ਤੇ ਆਧਾਰਤ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ

ਦਿੱਲੀ ਵਿਖੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਤੇ ਅੱਤਿਆਚਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਅਪਰਾਧੀ ਕੌਣ ਹਨ ?

ਇਹ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਇਨ-ਬਿਨ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕੀਤਾ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਇਹ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਦਾ ਇਨ-ਬਿਨ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਰਾਜਸੀ ਜਾਂ ਮਾਲੀ ਲਾਭ ਦੇ ਆਸ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾ ਛਪਵਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ।
ਅਨੁਵਾਦਕ—R. S. BEDI M.A. Sahitya Ratan, Parbhakar.

'Who are the Guilty?'

Report by People's Union of Civil Liberties

Four feet of Trilokpuri

A work of art depicting the results of genocide

Anandpur Sahib Resolution

Approach the side of India as a historically recognized political nation ever since the inauguration of the Order of the Khanda in the concluding years of the 17th Century and

Whereas, the status of the Sikh nation has been internationally recognized and accepted by major Powers of Europe and Asia to wit France, England, Italy, Russia, China, Tibet, Persia, Afghanistan, Persia and the Company Bahadur, Fort William, Calcutta, at the middle of the 18th Century and again by the ongoing Britain and the Hindu Congress and the Muslim League of India in the middle of the 20th Century and

Whereas, the Sikh majority in India, in 1950, have imposed a Constitutional arrangement in India which renders the Sikhs of their political identity and cultural particularity thus liquidating the Sikhs publicly and exposing them to spiritual death and cultural decay leading inevitably to submergence and dissolution into the Indian sea waters of acharya Heibloom, and

Whereas, the Sikhs have been thus treated and imprisoned in central regulation of violence commitments and public promises earlier made to the Sikhs, while the Sikh representatives in the Constituent Assembly, in 1950, declined to become a consenting party to these Constitutional arrangements and declined to affix their signature to the final copy of the Constitution, and

And that in the name and on behalf of the Sikhs

Proclaim that the Sikhs are determined, in all honorable means, to extricate and free themselves from this degrading and death-dealing situation so as to ensure their honorable survival and escape their inherent dignity in India, and their birthright to influence the mainstream of World history. The Sikhs, therefore,

Demand, firstly, that an autonomous region in the heart of India should be set up forthwith wherein the Sikhs interests are constitutionally recognized as of primary and special importance, on the fundamental basis of:

Secondly, that this autonomous region, should include the present Punjab, Karnal, and other districts of Haryana inclusive of Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Patna, Allah, Calcutta, Madras, Cochin, Goa, Gujrat and India areas and the Ganges-Yamuna District of Rajasthan, thus bringing main composite Sikh populations and historical Sikh heritage under the autonomous Sikh Region as an integral part of the Union of India and

Thirdly, that this Autonomous Region may be declared as entitled to frame its own internal Constitution on the basis of having all powers to send to itself except, Foreign Relations, Defense, Currency and General Communications to remain as subjects within the jurisdiction of the Federal Indian Government.

May the rider of the Blue Horse help us

Anandpur Sahib Resolution



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"To prevent threatened demonstrations at the 1982 Asian Games in Delhi, thousands of Sikhs were stopped, searched and humiliated by the [Haryana] Police; over 1500 were arrested".

Hurst Hannum, 'Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination' (1996)



Kulwant Singh Nagoke, was brutally tortured and killed in one of the first recorded staged 'Police encounter' killings. Tens of thousands of Sikhs would later suffer the same fate.

Oppression of Punjab, and the Sikhs, continued throughout the early 1980s and after a number of high profile incidents which pitted the Indian State against the Sikhs, relations took a turn for the worse at the Asian Games in 1982. A blanket prohibition was imposed preventing all Sikhs from travelling to Delhi. After nearly two years of failed negotiations, tens of thousands of arrests and with over 190 Sikhs killed the next stage of civil disobedience was called by Sikh leaders. Grain shipments that were distributed from Punjab to the rest of India would be withheld by farmers. This major step was to begin on 3rd June 1984. The Sikhs believed that this would compel the Indian State into negotiating with them. The Indian State however, opted for military action.

"The army went into [the] Darbar Sahib not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence".

Joyce Pettigrew, 'The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence' (1995)



Sikhs gather in front of the Akal Takht Sahib in disbelief at the damage caused by artillery shells.

On 1st June 1984, the Indian Government engaged in a full-scale military attack against Sikhs across the Punjab and India, centring on the heartland of Amritsar at Harimandir Sahib and Akal Takht Sahib. Planning had begun two and a half years earlier for this military action, code-named 'Operation Blue Star' which was scheduled to commence on the anniversary of Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom when the congregation in the complex would have been at full capacity. At least 10,000 people were trapped inside after a sudden curfew was announced. Helicopter gunships and tanks invaded the holiest Shrine of the Sikhs. Thousands of pilgrims were killed including women and children. The military attack was designed to strike at the heart of the Sikhs, and to crush the rising Sikh Civil Rights Movement.

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"It was a terrible tale of sadistic torture, ruthless killings, fake encounters, calculated ill-treatment of women and children, and corruption and graft on a large scale".

Citizens For Democracy; Report To The Nation: Oppression in Punjab (Bombay, 1985)



Mass funerals became a common sight as Sikh men continued to be targeted. In many cases entire villages were subjected to rape, torture and killing.

Almost immediately after the attack on Harimandir Sahib, Indian State Security forces intensified systematic and widespread killings of Sikhs across Punjab. This secondary phase of military action in June 1984 was codenamed 'Operation Wood Rose'. According to Indian Army bulletin Number 153 June 1984, circulated to army personnel, all Amritdhari Sikhs were "dangerous people and pledged to commit murder, arson and acts of terrorism" and needed to be "subdued to achieve the final aim of restoring peace in the country". The military targeted males over the age of 15, this demographic had been most vocal and supportive during the peaceful agitations. The elimination of youth was considered the most effective way to silence the rising Sikh Civil Rights Movement, which had mass support across Punjab. Human Rights groups reported that while tens of thousands of Sikh men disappeared, Sikh women were subjected to mass rape.

"The Creator pervades all places, but that space alone is said to be 'Harimandir' where the Creator is recognised and realised. Living by the Word of the Guru, we come to see the Creator in all, and we need not look anywhere but within for enlightenment. But those who do not recognise this, who do not see the 'Harimandir' for what it is, waste their time and lose the gift of life".

Guru Nanak, M.1 (Ang 953) Guru Granth Sahib



Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's body being carried aloft by a soon to become riotous crowd.

On the morning of 31st October 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was shot dead by two of her personal bodyguards in the garden of her official residence. Beant Singh and Satwant Singh had planned the assassination together; allegedly with a third man Kehar Singh, seeking justice for the attack on Harmandir Sahib. Both men laid their arms on the ground and did not attempt to flee the scene. However, a short time later it was reported that Beant Singh had been killed by gunfire, whilst Satwant Singh was injured from the same. Gandhi was pronounced dead a short time later and by 11am, All-India Radio announced her death, attributing blame to two Sikh bodyguards. Beant Singh's wife later revealed that her husband had been gravely concerned about Indira Gandhi's plan to eliminate Sikhs (allegedly Operation Shanti), and that this concern was a major factor in his decision to assassinate the Prime Minister.

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“Several meetings were held all over Delhi – Central, Outer, and trans-Yamuna area – in the late hours of 31 October to give final touches as it were, to the plan already prepared with meticulous care, with an eye on every minute detail, that nothing be left out to successfully exterminate the Sikhs”.

Amiya Rao, ‘Citizens for Democracy: Truth about Delhi violence: Report to the Nation’ (1985)



Following the pattern of widespread violence across northern India, a Sikh man is dragged from his vehicle and savagely beaten, his fate unknown.

Since the summer, rumours had surfaced that Gandhi and her counsel had been planning a nationwide Genocide of the Sikhs that would far surpass ‘Operations Blue Star’ and ‘Wood Rose’. Her untimely death meant that such an atrocity was not executed as planned, but it does explain how mass-murder and rampant destruction in Delhi was committed so thoroughly in such a short space of time. As soon as Rajiv Gandhi stepped outside of the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) where the Prime Minister had been pronounced dead, shouts of ‘Khoon ka badla khoon’ (Blood for Blood) rang out, encouraged by the likes of Congress politician H.K.L. Bhagat. By early evening, the anti-Sikh commotion was unequivocal as Indian President Gyani Zail Singh’s motorcade was attacked outside AIIMS.

"The atmosphere at the Home Minister's house did not show at all that there was any crisis in the country, and in the very capital around the Home Minister's own house. When we asked whether the Army was being called, he replied, 'It will be here in the evening'".

Patwant Singh, affidavit to Nanavati Commission (2000)



Looters, hooligans and Delhi residents watch Sikh homes, businesses and places of worship burn.

Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as Prime Minister on the same day his mother had been assassinated and so the nepotism of the ruling class families continued. Along with his cousin and Cabinet colleague Arun Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi unleashed the Congress Party workers who were fully versed and well prepared as to their role in the coming slaughter. Buses were used to transport people in to and around Delhi so that numbers on the ground would swell rapidly. Congress Party workers and activists made their way around the city targeting Sikh homes, businesses and Gurdwara, led by their own MPs, most notably Sajjan Kumar, Dharam Dass Shastri, Jadish Tytler, H.K.L. Bhagat and Congress Party Youth-wing leader Brahma Yadav.

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"The shop signs are either in Hindi or English. How do you expect the illiterate arsonists to know whether these shops belong to Hindus or Sikhs, unless they were identified to them by someone, who is either educated or a local person?"

Senior Police Officer testimony, 'People's Union For Civil Liberties:
Who are the Guilty?' (November 1984)



Mobs of young men, armed and organised stalk the streets of Delhi looking for Sikhs to attack and kill.

The Genocide was both orchestrated and enacted like a military operation. Mobs were supplied with iron rods, crowbars, lathis, containers of kerosene, inflammable powder and firearms. They took direction from Congress Party politicians and local civic leaders who distributed voters-lists identifying Sikh households and escorted buses to Sikh-owned businesses. Invariably, the Police force kept their distance from affected areas, stood idly by watching the scene unfold, or actively participated alongside the mobs. All the while, broadcast media did nothing to quell the atrocities, moreover Indian State owned stations such as Doordarshan incited more horror, replaying Government propaganda and crowds shouting anti-Sikh slogans demanding bloodshed.

"It was a strange coincidence that the iron rods used to bludgeon the victims throughout were of the same size and shape. In some states, where the influence of the north Indian Congress ruling class was not pronounced, there were little disturbances".

President Zail Singh, 'Memoirs of Giani Zail Singh: 7th President of India' (1997)



A Sikh man lies burning on the ground as men carrying automatic weapons surge past.

From the Wednesday afternoon, just hours after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, armed mobs had taken control of the streets and showed no signs of relenting days later. Wherever they were found, Sikh men were shaved of their hair, scalped, beaten to death, or faced the 'garland treatment' – tyres placed around their neck and then set alight so the victim roasted alive. Women were beaten, dishonoured and raped. Children suffered the same treatment. Gurdwara were robbed and then set alight, in some areas this was preceded by mobs defecating and urinating on the Guru Granth Sahib. Educational institutions with Sikh names were looted and vandalised. Entire communities resembled battlefields and then ghost towns, including the infamous Block 32 in Trilokpuri where some 400 Sikh men were murdered.

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"Rahul Bedi [reporter for the Indian Express] says he arrived at Trilokpuri early Friday afternoon to find the entrance sealed by Police constables who said, 'Nothing much was happening. It's all over. Maybe one or two people had been killed.' Bedi and the other reporter made their way to Block 32 and found the road leading to the temple 'carpeted with bodies, two or three deep, for a distance of nearly 50 feet'".

Mary Anne Weaver, Christian Science Monitor, edition of 15th November 1984



Mother Teresa on 8th November visiting the ruins of Trilokpuri

The Army was finally deployed on Friday 2nd November, but even then they went into Delhi in stages, visiting a single area before moving on to another, almost always reaching places that had long-since been razed. Some officers went on to lodge official complaints that they were being hindered by Police forces as well as lacking vital information within their own quarters. As a result, the mobs continued to commit crimes of Genocide for the next three days at least. Organised attacks against Sikhs, using the same tactics were replicated simultaneously across the Indian States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

"I ask you [Sikhs] to accept my word ... and the resolution of the Congress that it will not betray a single individual, much less a community... Our Sikh friends have no reason to fear that it would betray them. For, the moment it does so, the Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country too. Moreover, Sikhs are a brave people. They know how to safeguard their rights by exercise of arms if it should ever come to that".

Mohandas Gandhi, 'Communal Unity' (1948)



Sikhs gather in their hundreds of thousands at the Akal Takht Sahib during the Sarbat Khalsa in 1986, in defiance of the military curfew.

In the months following November, Sikhs across the Globe united in outrage at the Genocide. Those who had not been moved to do something after the attack on Harimandir Sahib joined the ever-increasing vocal support for justice, and demands for the enactment of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution intensified. Sikh Police Officers, members of the Armed Forces, and politicians left their posts in protest. In Punjab, countless young men left their homes and families to rise up in rebellion against the country that they no longer saw as their own. In 1986, a Sarbat Khalsa was called (gathering of Sikhs at Akal Takht Sahib) where the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) – who manage Gurdwara of historic importance – was dissolved and the Shiromani Akali Dal was all but sidelined. A new Panthic Committee consisting of five members was selected to speak on behalf of the Sikh people and a declaration of independence was unanimously passed.

1984 Delhi GENOCIDE

"The disappeared have floated away as ash on Punjab's rivers or been carried skyward as smoke into Punjab's scorching heavens. The few bits of evidence we have shock and repel us: a photo of a heap of partially-burned bodies, eerily reminiscent of the holocaust... Another grainy Polaroid print of a wild dog tearing at the charcoal remains of a human leg..."

Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, 'Writing the Bones' (1999)



Elderly survivor of the Delhi Genocide laments at the findings of yet another report that does not pursue the guilty. He knows this was his last chance.

The impact of the Delhi Genocide is still being felt today. News of entire villages that had disappeared at the time, continue to be uncovered, such as the massacre at Hondh Chillar – a place forgotten until 2011 when it was rediscovered housing ruins of the homes that had once stood there and hiding mass graves of the inhabitants that had once lived in them. The plan to eliminate the 'troublesome Sikhs' has taken a new shape, one more befitting the modern World, and evidence of it can be seen in the fields of academia, media and politics; but as with the Genocide of Delhi, we are only realising what is being done after the fact. The 'Niyara Panth' of Guru Nanak is being challenged just as it was in 1984; only the weapons have changed.

"I have no hesitation in apologising not only to the Sikh community but the whole Indian nation because what took place in 1984 is the negation of the concept of nationhood as enshrined in our Constitution. On behalf of our Government, on behalf of the entire people of this country, I bow my head in shame that such a thing took place".

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh 11th August 2005



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh offering his respect to cabinet minister H.K.L. Bhagat, a known organiser and instigator of the Delhi Genocide, who was shielded and promoted by PM Singh.

Justice will continue to be denied for the countless innocent people who were victims of Indian State-sponsored violence in 1984, if we do not understand what led to the Genocide. Until we realise who it is that we are facing in this battle, we will not be able to formulate a strategy that will see the Truth come out. The battle ground may have changed, as it has done invariably over the last hundred years, but there has been no let-up by those who oppose the way of Guru Nanak. They continue to silence people who want to see a fair and bright future for all, irrespective of caste, gender or religion. It is therefore up to us to become the best ideals of human beings, to become seekers of Truth, and to take responsibility of the World around us, if we want to see justice served. We are the people we have been waiting for and if we consider ourselves Sikhs, we owe it to those who paid with their lives to make a better World for mankind.

Glossary

Anandpur Sahib – The Holy City of Bliss, birth place of the Khalsa, fortified by Guru Gobind Singh in 1689.

Ang – The Sacred limbs of the Divine Revelations in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Akal Takht Sahib – The Throne of the Immortal, constructed by Guru Hargobind in 1606 representative of Sikh political sovereignty.

Amritdhari – A Sikh who has committed his/her life to live and uphold the principles of the Guru.

Darshani Deori – Gateway to Harimandir Sahib.

Dharma – Religion. For Sikhs Dharam is living righteously, walking the path of righteousness.

Dharam Yudh Morcha – The Sikh Civil Rights Movement, a struggle undertaken by Sikhs to live according to the teachings of the Guru.

Gurdwara – Doorway to the Guru, plural Gurdwara, is the Sikh place of congregation, healing, teaching, learning and the centre for community activism.

Guru – One who takes you from Darkness in to Light, the 11 Sikh Gurus shared the Same Divine Energy and are seen as one consciousness.

Guru Nanak – The First Guru a political, social, economic and spiritual revolutionary.

Guru Granth Sahib – The current Guru in Scripture form, composed by the Gurus, an Embodiment of the Divine Teachings of the Gurus and the Saints of God.

Guru Gobind Singh – The 10th Guru who further reinforced the political and spiritual teachings of the previous Gurus by creating the Order of the Khalsa in 1699.

Guru Panth – the Personification of the Teachings of the Guru in the form of the Khalsa Collective, also known simply as - the Panth.

'Halemi Raj' – A truly utopian society where Divine Truth, Love and Compassion forms the basis of rule.

Harimandir Sahib – Temple of God, conceived by Guru Amar Dass, construction was started by Guru Ram Dass and completed by Guru Arjan Dev in 1601. Covered in Gold by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1802, Harimandir Sahib is commonly referred to as the Golden Temple.

Ik Oangkar – The Singular Divine Frequency that created and binds all of existence together.

Khalsa – The universal Sister/Brother-hood created by the Guru to uphold Dharam, the culmination of the teachings of the Guru.

Kaur – Princess, a Sikh female. The surname Kaur was given by Guru Gobind Singh to Sikh women who became Amritdhari.

Maharaja – Emperor

Misls – Sikh military unit or brigade. A Misl represented the Sikh warriors and the territory acquired by them in the course of their campaigns of conquest.

Mughals – An Islamic Empire that dominated Southeast Asia from 1526 to 1757.

Nishan Sahib – The flag of the Sikhs, its installation at a location (typically a Gurdwara) marks the presence of the Guru Panth, all travellers may seek shelter and protection under its grace.

Niyara Panth – The New Order for society as envisioned by Guru Nanak and reinforced by the subsequent Gurus.

Panj Pyare – The Five Beloved Ones, the first of the Sikhs to offer their heads to the Guru to Live for Humanity as Khalsa.

Panth – see Guru Panth

Rajas – Kings.

Sarbat Khalsa – Gathering of Sikhs to discuss political affairs that concern the Guru Panth.

Sarkar-e-Khalsa – Empire of the Khalsa.

Shiromani Akali Dal – Sikh political party formed in 1920 to represent Sikhs. The current form the party is secular; it does little to represent Sikhs.

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee – A committee set up to manage the affairs of Historic and Significant Sikh Gurdwaras, now a far cry from its ideals.

Sikh - One who is on the path of the Guru's teachings.

Sikhi - The Sikh way of life, the teachings of the Guru.

Singh - Lion, a Sikh male. The surname Singh was given to Sikh men who became Amritdhari by Guru Gobind Singh. On becoming baptised by the Panj Pyare the Guru discarded his family name and from Guru Gobind Rai, became Guru Gobind Singh.

Sirdar - Male who wears a Dastaar (turban), a term of respect.

Vaisakhi - The anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa.



The National Sikh Youth Federation was founded in March 2012 as a an independent NGO and Think Tank that works with individuals and organisations in the Sikh Community. NSYF specialises in research and education for the advancement of core issues that affect the Sikh community. We also promote spirituality and networking amongst Sikhs in the UK. We work to support an environment that fosters collaboration and unity.

Our objectives are:

- The Advancement of the Sikh Religion
- Education of Sikh History
- The Advancement of Human Rights

www.nsyf.org.uk

Registered Charity: 1149346

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