

The Communal Award Impact and Implication: Sikh prospective

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Abstract

The Communal Award was climax statement of the Round Table Conferences (RTCs). The British Government published white paper in 1932 in which they awarded the communal representation to resolve the Indian constitutional questions and problems. Although Communal Award turned the table of the whole Indian politics but the Punjab province was much disturbed because of its communal representation. After Communal declaration inter-communal tensions further flared up. It could not satisfy any one and not settle disputed issues between Muslims and Sikhs. The Sikhs were very well aware their numerical weakened position that is why their demanded share in the Punjab Government was according to their contribution in revenue and in Army instead of their numbers. Under the guiding notes and principles of British White Paper the India Act of 1935 came on and elections 1937 were held under its recommendations. Communal representation urged to all communities for new political alliances to save their interests. This study comprehends the Sikh struggle for their constitutional rights in the united India and how Sikh leadership fought for their demands during the RTCs. It is an attempt to explore Sikh prospect regarding impacts and implications of the Award on regional politics in upcoming years. Different nature Sikh political parties' role and contribution to recognize Sikhs' as significant and distinctive community and their influence in the politics is also

subject of this paper. To investigate and explore the historical facts Governor Fortnightly Reports, newspaper, RTCs papers and all other concerned documents are scanned.

Keywords: Sikhs, Punjab, Communal Award, Constitutional rights, Elections

In late thirties of twentieth century communal rift and turmoil reached at highest point at that time when Nehru Report and in response Jinnah fourteen demands turned the situation in bitter. Pandit Nanak Chand stirred a Motion in the Punjab Council that a report of taken initiatives to decipher communal clashes should submit by organized committee¹. In the same session, Buta Singh Sikh from Shaikhupura (Rural) and Sir Jogendra Singh minister of agriculture gave guarantee “as regard our community, we will leave no stone unturned to make it successful. It is our genuine desire that we should live and let live. This is the motto, upon which I wish that every community should act and the moment these tangles are solved here then the whole problem about this communal representation will be solved.”²

Meanwhile the British Government held the RTCs in 1930 to discuss the Indian constitutional problems. Fifty-eight representatives of Indian communities were invited.³ Sir Agha Khan, Jinnah, Mr Fazl-ul-Huq, Muhammad Ali Johar, and Sir Shafi attended conferences as Muslim representative whereas Sikhs nominated S. Sampuran Singh and S.Ujjal Singh. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr Jaykar, and Mr Shastri were from Hindu community, Chintamani presenting liberals, Dr. B.S. Moonje and Dr. Ambedkar representing Maha Sabha and the suppressed classes respectively. The All Indian National Congress did not represent Indians in the First RTC, because of Gandhi’s Civil Disobedience Movement. In the first RTC, right of separate electorate was major demand of Muslims. Muslims were arguing for other communities which had meager strength such as Indian Christians, Anglo-Indian and Sikhs.⁴ The Indians delegates also demanded a system of Governance, in the Center and provinces similar to Parliamentary system of British⁵ and debated for their constitutional rights. The Sikh

delegates gave divergent consent and stressed on the joint electorate along with reserved seats for the minorities. A memorandum was presented to Minority Committee by Sikhs; they demanded treatment identical to the Muslims but their demand was vetoed by Muslim members of the minority Committee.⁶

To resolve Indians' problem Sir Geoffrey Corbett⁷ suggested a plan of Punjab partition. In first session RTC. Corbett had confidence that clear Muslim majority in the Punjab Legislature is necessary for the political stability of the province. He suggested, Ambala Division should be excluded from existing Punjab. Simla Districts, North-West of Ambala District and its attached areas of United Provinces should be merged with Punjab. According to provided census report of year 1921 Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims' numeric strength percentage in the Punjab divisions was 11.1, 31.8 and 55.3 respectively whereas other minorities were just 1.8 percent.⁸ Separation of Ambala from Punjab was a key to increase Muslim percentage and as result, the Sikhs would be in the worst condition.⁹ Exclusion of Ambala will turn communal proportion as follow; Muslims 61.8, Hindus 23.6 and Sikhs 12.6.¹⁰ This scheme was disapproved by Sikhs because it was based on misreading of the Sikh position and demands.

The Congress leadership joined RTCs after settlement between Gandhi and Irwin. Gandhi selected to lead Congress in RTC.¹¹ Before Gandhi's leaving for RTC a Sikh deputation led by Master Tara Singh met Gandhi and designated him for their advocacy on the RTC, hoping that Gandhi would represent Sikhs' demands with sympathy in the RTC submitted a memorandum of seventeen demands for consideration of their 30 percent share in the provincial legislature or the readjustment of the Punjab's territorial boundaries¹² with the argument that submission of counter demands of the same nature is only way to fight communalism.¹³ Gandhi was not in favour of these communal nature demands, he forwarded their demands to Congress Working Committee but Congress Working Committee not only vetoed Sikhs plan but framed a new formula.¹⁴ The Congress Committee claimed reserved

chairs in the Federal and provincial legislatures for Muslims of Assam, Sikhs of Punjab and NWFP, Hindus of Sindh where these communities were considering minority.¹⁵

At the end of the First Session, a unanimous report was submitted by Minorities Committee with recommendation that for the solution of whole constitutional issues some agreement and settlements should come between all major communities.¹⁶ Congress working Committee's plan was discussed in the Minority Committee of RTC.¹⁷ The Congress Working Committee assured that Congress have firmed believe that communal issues can be solved only on national lines with the satisfaction of all communities of India particularly Sikh community in the Punjab. According to Congress Committee's formula it was assured "no solution thereof in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned."¹⁸

Gandhi advocacy lacking regarding acceptance of the formula¹⁹ he said "If however, a national solution is impossible and the Congress scheme proves unacceptable, I am not precluded from endorsing any other responsible Scheme which may be acceptable to the parties concerned. The Congress position on this question, therefore, is one of the greatest possible accommodations."²⁰ Sikh and Muslim members of the Minority Committee disapproved the formula. In the same session, Corbett's readjustment plan of Punjab boundaries was again discussed but it was rejected by Hindus and Sikhs, who viewed it Muslim domination in Punjab.²¹ S.Ujjal Singh remarked that its confirmed object is to secure another overwhelming Muslim majority Province, further weaken numeral status of Sikh and Hindu and make turned them in worse than today.²²

Meanwhile the Sikhs all Parties Conference was called on in September 1931 in India and Congress Committee's formula was discussed. Sikh leadership parted in two halves. Surdul Singh Caveeshar; a nationalist leader critiqued the Sikhs' seventeen points and supported the formula.²³ Gandhi arranged a non-formal meeting among Muslim, Sikh and Hindu

leaders for the solution of the problem.²⁴ Jinnah was firm for the demand of separate electorate. Sikh leader S.Ujjal Singh relaxed towards demand and accepted 24% representation instead of 30 percent share in the Punjab Legislative which was justifying their numerical strength.²⁵

S.Ujjal Singh's consent was condemned in India by all Sikh Associations and sent message to him that not any relaxation would be acceptable as far as Sikh representation concerned in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.²⁶ So S.Ujjal Singh restated²⁷ "unless the communal question, which in the Punjab means the Muslim-Sikh question, is settled, it is not possible for the Sikhs to commit themselves to a federal scheme in which the Punjab would be an autonomous province."²⁸ S.Ujjal Singh explained we came down on 24 percent it was just room for settlement although it would be unfair and prejudicial that Muhammadans could preserve very reasonable weightage in other six Muslim minority provinces and Sikhs will be ignored.²⁹ S. Ujjal Singh forwarded a proposal to set the communal proportion and resolve the weightage demand in the Punjab readjustment of Punjab boundaries is need of the hour. He suggested that Multan and Rawalpindi Divisions of the Punjab excluding Lyallpur and Montgomery districts should be attached with the North-West Frontier Province.³⁰ According to his readjustment plan of Punjab boundary, proportion's plan of communities could have designed that Muslims could retain 43 percent, Hindus on 42 percent and Sikhs on 14.4 percent. S.Ujjal Singh said "if this solution is also unacceptable to our Muslim brethren, we should prefer no change from the present constitution in the Punjab"³¹

During second session of RTCs undisputed seventeen demands of Sikhs were submitted by S.Sampuran and S.Ujjal Singh to the Minority Committee. They gave two options either 30% in Punjab legislature and 5% in center or rearrangement of Punjab boundaries. In case of new constituted Punjab they were in favour of joint electorates, without any reservation of seats. They stretched their demand that Punjabi should be official Language of the Punjab and Sikhs must have right to choose Gurmukhi or Shahmukhi script. Master Tara Singh attended

third RTC and added more in Sikhs demands allocation share in services, representation share in Sindh Assembly along with 5 percent portion of representation in center.³²

Pre- Award Sikhs' Activities

The Sikhs were not pleased with the proceedings of the RTCs. Sikhs took all possible measures to transform British attitude towards the Sikh constitutional rights and recognized themselves as an important community. S.Ujjal Singh and S.Sampuran Singh boycotted the third RTC³³ and resigned from the consultation committee of the RTC with this note that "by the establishing a communal majority in the Punjab, make such a fundamental change in the very foundation on which the constitutional superstructure has to be erected that we are constrained to consider the new constitution to be then the existing one. We feel that we will be serving no useful purpose by continuing cooperation with any community formed for the purpose of the constitution making"³⁴ In India, meetings and *Diwans* were staged by Sikhs and anti-communal day was celebrated to show their resentment.

The Congress was bluffing, on one hand Sikhs' seventeen points were opposing in RTC but on the other hand embroiling them in Civil Disobedience³⁵ and to achieve their goals Congress fixed May 6, for anniversary celebrations the shooting on Gurdwara of Sisganj, to assure Hindu Maha Sabha's backing to Sikh claims joined Sikh political conference on June 3, 1932 in Turn Taran and Hindu community supported the Sikh's resolution in Dara Sahib. On July 31, 1932 a *Diwan* was staged in the Lahore, Hindus also attended it. Lalchand Falak stated that despite of numeral inferiority of Sikhs from other races, they should remember that the entire Hindu community provided grounds for the *Khalsa* recruitment. Same evening in the Lajpat Rai Hall Hindus held meeting there was stimulating speeches were delivered in favour of Sikhs.³⁶

As Communal declaration time was coming closer, among Sikhs nervousness and uneasiness and apprehensions for their political future were growing acute. Generally they were feeling that their achieved rights in the upcoming

constitution would be fall far short of their demands. The Sikhs of all shades were unanimous that contribution in revenue and military input should be root cause of their proportion in the Center and Province. They were holding meetings and *Diwans*, there speakers were being engaged to provoke masses against the Muslims' claim for statutory majority.

All representatives of Sikh community around eight hundred delegates of notables and institutions gathered in Lahore Conference on the 24th of July 1932 Giani Sher Singh presided conference. In this conference intense enthusiasm prevailed to assure balance of power in future constitutional settlement in the Punjab. Additionally they showed their firm determination against the establishment of communal raj by the creating a religious majority. After Ostentatious speeches all representatives agreed on three resolutions; firstly they would resist against their submission to Muslim communal majority, secondly they would resist against any measure of Council of Action which effect the Sikh demands of their representation in Legislature , thirdly community would be ready any sacrifice against domination of any specific community.³⁷ On the event of *Akhand Path* from 29 to 31 of July these resolutions will have been read out at all *Akhand Paths* venues.³⁸

The Council of Action was cluster of Moderate and Extremist Sikhs. Baba Kharak Singh, Sampuran Singh, Tara Singh, Sher-i-Punjab Amar Singh, Ujjal Singh, Buta Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Sant Singh and Sundar Singh MAjithia were prominent members of the Council of Action.³⁹ On July 30, The Council of Action started recruitment to raise an Akali Shahdi Dal of 100000 members in the urban and rural areas on July 30 and 21st of August respectively. In the first quarter of August, political atmosphere was very tense in some larger towns mainly in Amritsar, Lahore, and Multan. Sikh Right Day was celebrated on July 31, and on August 5, Ahrars observed as the Punjab Day. In some areas Muslims took oath after Jumma congregation that they would opposed any effort against their rights as majority community.⁴⁰

The Government took military precautions and appointed additional police to stay away Sikhs from any action leading to communal conflicts. The Council of Action called a meeting on 14th of August, only five members attended it and three resolutions were passed; first for calling an explanation from those Sikhs who attended the Simla conferences, second revealing to the correspondence between Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Sir Jogindar Singh, for restating determination of the Sikhs to reject formula of communal majority, and third that before formation of council of action policy Sikhs will initiate nothing because Sikhs were not ready to counter any militant programme. Akali Shahdi Dal recruitment has been found completely fictitious in urban zones and still it was not announced in rural parts.⁴¹ The Sikh Council of Action meeting called at Shahdara in August 20, 1932. The Council made decisions that Council of Action would be call with the name Guru Khalsa Durbar and Akali Shahidi Dal will merge in Shiromani Akali Dal, September 17, will celebrate as "Panthic Day". On Panthic Day all Sikhs will worn black turban and the Garanth Sahib Cover will be change with the local product. Sikh Rights Defence fund established and decided that at least contribution of four *annas* will obligatory for every Sikh.⁴² Later on the Central and Provincial Legislatures were invited to protest against the Communal Award and to prove their loyalty forced to submit their resignations the Khalsa Durbar.⁴³ Sundar Singh Majithia went against this idea.⁴⁴

A Conference was arranged in Moga, District Ferozepur from August 26 to 28, 1932, Giani Sher Singh was leading it. There were local cattle fair was celebrating so surprisingly around five to eight thousand people were present there, speakers delivered aggressive speeches against British.⁴⁵ A Singh of Kot Kapura from the Farid Kot State, stated that the Muslim domination means the demolition of their *Gurdwaras*, he also blatantly stated that if the Sikhs' rights were ignored by Government than their swords would remain uncovered till their death.⁴⁶ British called them as notorious' and 'offender' who were using belligerent languages. However in Sikh headquarters widespread disagreements were going on, The Council of Action meeting attending by the nine members,

preceded in August 31, S. Ujjall Singh and S. Sampuran Singh were appreciated for resigning from the RTC Committee. The Council forced to all Sikh members of legislatures to follow their action. The Council of Action was expecting resignations of the Sikh legislatures and preparing to formulate aggressive and striking programme although all Sikh members of the Legislative Council had been decided categorically that demand of resignation would not be accepted. Till that moment no reforms were announced for Sikhs until the communal settlement had almost finalized so it was decided that no Sikh would be take part in the RTC or any similar committee.⁴⁷ Council of Action had been introduced a fund for the protection of Sikh rights but Council was not satisfied with fund collection.⁴⁸

The CKD and Council of Action had divergent opinions and plans for register their resentment against the award. In the response of Shivdev Singh' letter the Council of Action Programme was opposed by the CKD on September 19, 1932. The CKD proposed peaceful strategy and stressed that it should up to the community either reject or accept it. Sundar Singh programme was as follow:

1. "A walk-out from the present Council as protest and in his belief we can prevail upon Hindus to join hands with us.
2. Abstention from actual meeting of the Council but members to be present in Lahore during sessions to attend if needed with view to obstruction on constitutional lines.
3. Minister not to resign their seats and carry on and thus not allow dummies to take their places.
4. Members not to resign at present but only act as in (1&2) above.
5. To take a plebiscite of the Hindu and Sikh voters saying they don't want reforms but wish present constitution to continue. If we can do this, Government

cannot force reform upon 45% of Punjab.

6. Press for distribution of Province if we do not succeed plebiscite to include cessation from Frontier districts which are prominently Mohammedans.
7. Meetings of protest to be held monthly to record protest.
8. Formation of Sabhas in towns and villages for propagation of programme.
9. Special instructions to keep non-violent and to propagate brotherly feeling between different communities.”⁴⁹

Sundar Singh Majithia leader of a pro-British party CKD and his fellows clarified “We would have done our duty to warn them against their hasty actions and if they persist in their method and lead the Panth astray, then the responsibility will be theirs and not ours.”⁵⁰ Majithia also sent a letter to the Governor Sir Montmorency, he said the “Government not to pronounce an award favoring any particular community placing the Punjab at the mercy of such a community”⁵¹ and additionally noted, “we claim nothing more than that a single principle in giving of weightage to all minorities in the provinces be [is] applied and Sikh community should not be singled out and deprived of its rightful weightage in the Punjab”⁵²

Sikhs’ Response after Proclamation of Award

The Second RTC ended on first December 1932. Prime Minister delivered concluding statement in the Parliament “If the Communities in India were unable to reach a settlement acceptable to all parties on the communal question, which the Conference had failed to solve, his Majesty Government were determined that India’s constitutional advance should not on that account be frustrated and that they would remove this obstacle by advising and applying themselves a provisional Scheme”⁵³ and concluding to RTC Ramsay Macdonald declared Communal representation settlement plan under observations and recommendations of the Simon Commission

and RTC sub committees' reports,⁵⁴ for the formation of a new constitution. The Prime Minister stated: "we never wished to intervene in the communal controversies of India. We made that abundantly clear during the both sessions of the RTC when we strove hard to get Indians to settle this matter between them."⁵⁵ According to the Declaration, Muslims were awarded with 33.1 percent representation in the center and almost 50 percent in the Punjab, Hindus got 30percent but the Sikh community was deprived from their demand because of their meager numerical strength. Their demands of 30 percent in Punjab, 5 percent in center being denied and they just received 19 percent in Punjab Legislative Assembly and 2.4 percent in center and in the Council of The State their representation was accepted only 2.66 percent,⁵⁶ which were almost half of their demand. According to Communal Declaration, seats were as follow; general seats 43(counting one female), Sikhs 32(counting one female), Muhammadan 86(comprising two females), Indian Christians;2, Europeans; 1, Anglo Indians; 1, Commerce; 1, university ;1, Landholders; 5,and labour; 3 of total 175. "The so-called general, consisting of Hindus plus odd and ends."⁵⁷

Communal Award was condemned and criticized in all over the India except Muslim majority areas.⁵⁸ It widened communal tensions among stake holders. A pro-Muslim newspaper *Statesman* favoured Award in general but mentioned "the Award does broadly and honestly carry out the intensions that the minorities shall have a voice in the Government until such time as India can conduct its affairs as one nation".⁵⁹ Another Newspaper *Liberty* commented "it will create an up roar from one end of India to the other, and in all probability will throw the country into a vortex of communal passions. It goes – unfair is not the word to criticize the terms of the Award."⁶⁰ Chintamani remarked, "if it was framed on the lines so far indicated in this communal award would be an increase in communal quarrels instead of an increase of popular progress, prosperity and happiness"⁶¹

The Sikhs were unhappy with this Award and very much concerned for establishment of National Government not

only for Punjab but for whole of India as well, acceptance of Award was very painful and unbearable for Sikhs. Despite the internal differences, all political factions of Sikhs were unanimously agreed on the demand of constitutional status and incompetence of the announced communal representation to defend the Sikhs' interests.⁶² In August 17, 1932 at Simla eight prominent Sikh leaders; Diljit Singh, Sundur Singh Majithia, Jogindra Singh, S.Sampuran Singh, S.Ujall Singh, Sant Singh, Kartar Singh and Jaswant Singh issued statement, that The decision of Government shaken the trust and faith of the Sikh. This decision is raised a question, on British proclamation that their policy is based on justice and fair play.⁶³ After two days complained through press that all other communities have awarded with eighty four positions and 91 positions have fixed only for Muslims.⁶⁴ They also sent telegram to Prime Minister that the present conditions of the India a new constitution with static and fixed communal percentage would be more risky and worse than standing constitution. Sikh also requested that existing constitution of the Punjab should be dawdled till the finalization of communal settlement.⁶⁵ Akalis considered it "as scrap of paper which should be buried along with the Nehru Report."⁶⁶

The Sikhs organized Khalsa Darbar to launch campaign against the Communal Declaration. Sikh leadership criticized given concession to Muslims in the Award. They remarked if this award fulfilled Muslims expectations than it would create grave situation for Sikhs. New constitution would be dangerous if against the wishes of Sikhs and Hindus who collectively form half of the population and paying almost 2/3rd of the revenue of Punjab would be under domination of Muslim majority.⁶⁷ Sikh leaders also complained only 13 percent Sikh in the Punjab contributing 40 percent revenue and their share in armed forces and agriculture comparatively more than other majority community but all these facts could not add value in constitutional weightage but Muslims, are awarded more than their demand whereas in the private meeting with Prime Minister outside RTC sessions "Muslim delegates were ready to accept 50% Muslim representation in the Punjab, but the Government appease them with 52%."⁶⁸ They said that; The

British Award only establishes a “Muslim communal majority in a provinces like the Punjab where other communities pay about two-third towards the revenue of the province....”⁶⁹ The Sikh leadership was not expecting that the British Government would approve such a one-sided constitution which is forcing a larger portion of population into subordination against its desires or a new constitution will forced on them without their consensus because it was contrast with British parliament democratic traditions of justice and fair play. They pleaded in Simla to Sikhs that Sikh community should disaffiliate from the districts of Northern Punjab, drew an opinion to exercise self-determination and preserve peace and harmony all other sister communities.

All political leadership of Sikh community was demonstrating everywhere against communal award and everywhere but their factional rivalries increasing day by day. Akali Party had parted in two groups on Patiala issue and Nehru Repot. Giani Sher Singh and Master Tara Singh confronting each other Giani Sher Singh established Central Akali Dal (CAD) as opponent party of SGPC, and Tara Singh was prepared for demonstration against the Giani in planned Conference in March 1934.⁷⁰ Seemingly it looked that both Akali factions were shaping seminars and meetings to lift pressure up against the Communal Declaration, but in actuality both were damaging prestige of the community. The Nationalist Sikhs were opposing the Akalis demand, Baba Kharak Singh considered Azad Punjab and Pakistan as coincided demands, in his opinion both schemes would be lead to the partition of India.

Among Hindus and Sikhs of rural areas received this declaration with apathy and in the political circles of these communities spread dissatisfaction however the Muhammadans were pleased with it.⁷¹ Hindu leadership used profligate language to embroil Sikhs’ sympathies and stimulate them against the Communal Award. Arya Samajiya Sabha stressed upon formation of separate association.⁷² In subsequent years Hindus remained active in this Campaign against the Communal Award. In September 2, 1934, pandit Madan

Mohan Malavuya condemned unequivocally this decision of Government and said “India never before had such bitterness existed against Government, nor had Indians and Europeans in this land been so completely estranged. He ended by saying that Indian did not want this atmosphere to continue, but wanted peace on honorable terms.”⁷³

Communal Award’s Impacts and Implications on Indian politics

A British politician Lord Lothian defined the Indian society “Indian society ...is essentially a congress of widely separated classes, races and communities with divergences of interests and hereditary sentiments which for ages have precluded common action or local unanimity.”⁷⁴ The Communal Award was introduced as a representation arrangement scheme for the Indian Communities in Center and provincial legislative Assemblies. John Gallagher, described “the Communal Award was nothing but a sign of [the] determination [of the British Government] to wrap the Indian question towards electoral politics.”⁷⁵ Some supporters of imperialism debated “rise of Indian political consciousness meant the ultimate triumph of British stewardship, but given the invective hurled by officials and politicians towards Indian political actors and given the rather cynical schemes concocted to keep India British.”⁷⁶

India Act of 1935 was drawn on suggested lines of Communal Award and under the guidance of Cripps Mission Report. Self-Rule was introduced at Provincial level but wide-ranging powers on legislation were not passed on. In this Act, formation of state Parliaments and ministries was in the hands of Indians but authoritative powers reserved for the British. Governor was authority to intervene because of given dictatorial authorities. These authorities had been titled as ‘special responsibilities’ of Viceroy and Governors in the Act of 1935.⁷⁷ Limited right of vote was allowed with tricky conditions to deprive a heavy population for its right. It was confined for having specific educational qualification for female and male and Scheduled Castes.⁷⁸ In rural areas it was limited for those who were part of High Majesty forces, and

landed property taxation system. In Urban areas major criteria for electors was Land market value and revenue and income valuation of the income tax.⁷⁹ This Act could not fulfill its specific goals⁸⁰ but it turned the political scenario of the whole India. Nehru and Gandhi gained fame as nationalist. The This Act was considered 'a new charter of Slavery'.⁸¹ British Government was firm to implement it without consensus of the Indian people.⁸²

The Communal Declaration was affected on all over Indian communities but according to Sikhs' prospect they were most mistreated and neglected in all walks of life. Their efforts and struggle against the award proved fruitless because all community and political factions were worried for their powers in future constitutional structure. Political status consciousness divided them in different electoral blocs and it was alarming to secure strong position in future legislatures because upcoming elections would have been on Communal basis. It was the one of the silent feature of this Award.⁸³ In March 24, 1934 all Sikh representation unanimously declared in the Sikh National Conference "the Communal Award as a most dangerous piece of document for Sikhs particularly and has been designed to create disunity among the sister communities in India"⁸⁴ The *Mahabratra* a Hindu paper wrote "the decision of the Indian communal problem is being received with the severest condemnation by all real nationalists. The Hindus have been wholly disappointed. The Sikh of the Punjab have become almost fierce in their position to the decision....there is no doubt that the decision is entirely against all principles of nationalism and democracy."⁸⁵ In March 16, 1935 National Sikh Conference was held at Amrtsar Sardar Kharak Singh said that "he would not hesitate to launch a campaign and lead the first *Jatha* in this cause and suffered the consciences."⁸⁶

First General Elections 1937 had had great importance for every community of Punjab. Elections date was fixed for the province of Punjab from January 18, to February 3, 1937. According to census 1931 Muslim majority was on 53.1%, Hindus was on 30.6% and Sikhs were only 14.5%.⁸⁷ Sikh divided various factions because of mushroom growth of

political parties and groups among them.⁸⁸ There were two major parties CKD and Akali Dal parties were playing as Loyalist or Pro-British and Nationalist respectively. Along these parties there were some others like Giani Sher Singh's faction the CAD, the socialist, Congressite, and Communist Sikhs⁸⁹. Only CAD could secure its position with merger of the NKP. Any other group could not secure noteworthy position but just scratched the Sikhs' political power. The religio-political party SAD and pro-British CKD did not join hands for the establishment of Joint Board.⁹⁰ Sunder Singh, Jodh Singh and Joginder Singh reorganized the CKD and rename it as Khalsa National Party⁹¹(KNP). It had three major goals first elimination of the Communal Award second all communities' unification as Indian nationalism third absolute Swaraj.⁹² The NKP party membership was open for everyone because its creed and plans were being developed for the promotion of nationalism, betterment of economic and social status of people and national self-respect.⁹³

The SAD contested in elections focusing on attainment of complete independence, for this purpose SAD and Khalsa Darbar established a joint election Board⁹⁴ but this alliance was very weak. For elections' manifesto campaign in rural areas the SAD used *Jathas* strategy. At early stage SAD resistance for election campaign was only focused on Communal Award but later on they used religious conflicts such as modification of Gurdwara Reform Bill and control of *Shaheed Gunj* to motivate Sikhs however a few reforms for agriculture were also included in their agenda. After Communal Declaration a survey report was conducted by a military officer that that Sikh community has known that after democratic autonomous government in the provinces would first step towards rule of majority. Akali Party; an anti-British body was also looking for allies who might strengthen their position in the elections. It "turned to the Congress which might be helpful for them. Con⁹⁵gress changed their policy for Award because they realized without the Sikhs' support they would not be able won the elections so both parties' alliance was a marriage of convenience because it was the only way to defeat Muslims. The Congress-Akalis alliance remained persistent till than outbreak of the World War II.

Although a number of Akalis were not in favour of this alliance. Consequently Akalis fell apart into two halves and a new party organized with the name of Central Akali Dal(CAD). Amar Singh Sher-i-Punjab, S.Bahadur Mehtab Singh, and Giani Sher Singh were its prominent leadership. This faction only weakened the SAD position.⁹⁶ The SAD presented a comprehensive manifesto to attract Sikh public but the CAD had no wide-ranging programme.

S. Surmukh Singh Jabbal organized Congress Sikh Party (CSP) in 1936 under the guidance of Congress⁹⁷ and gathered Congress oriented Sikhs. Its specific goal was popularization of an idea of absolute freedom of India and only Congress associated Sikhs could be its members. For elections many Kirits, socialist Sikhs associated with this party. Jawaharlal Nehru also supported the party while he was touring Punjab for elections.⁹⁸

The NKP and SAD contested Sikh constituencies and won more than two-third of the 33 seats.⁹⁹ The SAD was defeated by the NKP. SAD frustrated with this situation because it had considered itself actual representative of the community. SAD considered this loss a threat for their control on the SGPC. The SAD failed for two reasons first for alliance with Congress, and second 'Desh Bhagat Priwar Sahaik Committee; an extremist body campaigned against Akalis that the Sikhs should not support the Akalis.¹⁰⁰ Maharaja of Patiala also in the favour of the NKP and was trying to make it powerful and popular in the SGPC.¹⁰¹ The NKP was interested to unite all political factions of Sikh community to get electoral seats. The CAD and Maharaja of Patiala supported NKP consequently the NKP achieved some more seats in contrast to Akalis. The NKP won the 14 and Akalis only 10 seats whereas total 33 seats were awarded by British. SAD was popular as extremist and religious group in rural areas of the central Punjab¹⁰² but lost its popularity because of it joined hand with Congress for the nomination of electoral representatives.

In Punjab any party did not qualify for formation ministry independently however election results were near to

British Government desires. Government had apprehension because of Akali and Congress affiliation but success of loyal group KNP, and moderate Sikh group CAD satisfied them that now Congress and Akalis would not be able to establish strong hold. British divide and rule policy was functioning perfectly. Emerson reported to Linlithgow, "This is the first time for some years that moderate Sikhs have come into open and seriously challenged the position which the Akalis have obtained. The results are gratified"¹⁰³ The Unionist party was invited to form coalition Ministry.

Sikhs political strength had been divided into five groups. Factional politics was at peak. One significant feature was noticed among Sikhs that beside religious extremism and British loyalty that socialist also won the seat even among the Hindus and Muslims. The KNP leaders Sunder Singh Majithia and some others got positions in Legislative Assembly. Majithia accepted revenue ministry with ambition to protect Sikhs' political future. The NKP became part of Unionist because of its non-Communal characteristics to provoke communal harmony and it publicized that an agreement would be signed with the unionist to defend the Sikhs' interests before becoming partners in the cabinet but Emerson opened the secret that before elections it was settled between Sunder Singh and Sikandr that NKP would accept ministries without any condition. But letter of NKP eminent leader Giani Sher Singh to Jawahar Lal was telling another story he wrote that "to some extent Khalsa National Party has succeeded in rooting out the communal bigotry from the Punjab, if the circumstances continue to be favorable, I am confident that by the efforts of this party, the communal Award would be modified." The SAD condemned Sunder Singh Majithia for acceptance of Ministry and NKP was called traitors and Panth enemy by them.

The SAD and Congress united and took position on opposition benches.¹⁰⁴ Opposition was leading by S. Sampuran Singh because Congress for the reasons of internal differences could not refer name of any member Congress Party.¹⁰⁵ To retain SAD previous status in masses S. Sampuran Singh gave judgment that opposition would not collaborate with any

individual and party who was favoured the communal Award.¹⁰⁶ Sikh Communist group Baba Rur Singh, Kabul Singh, Harjap Singh, Sohan Singh Josh, Rugbir Kour, and Teja Singh were supporting Unionists. Sunder Singh Majithia debated on the Congress-Akalis alliance “destructive policy carried on by other groups (reference to the Akali party) during the past decade has yielded nothing but disruption and chaos in the community and their high sounding declaration had ended in nothing but smoke.”¹⁰⁷

The SAD always verified Emerson’s view that the KNP and Unionist party alliance is unconditional and Sikandar gave them ministry just enhance KNP determination to damage the rising power of the SAD(Akalis) as political and religious giants. The SAD always disliked communal policies of Unionist leader Sikandar who claimed its party is non-communal. The KNP always be active against the Akali Party to decrease their impression among Sikhs. The police raided on the prominent Akalis and carried on searches several times. Unionist supporters Sikhs were also damaging the SAD in the eyes of public in different ways and creating agitations; for instance a strike started in the Khalsa College because of the circulation of a defamatory pamphlet by an anti-Akali group in the college to expose Master Tara Singh’s brother Professor Niranjan Singh, students resented on it, situation became severe and principal suppressed to call police to grasp situation and disperse crowd. Police took extravagant action which magnified strike. The strike really became a skirmish between Akalis and their rivals. Despite of strike and agitation Professor Niranjan Singh was alleged and terminated. This action made Akalis offensive and tried to start a strike against management committee’s decision which formed with moderate Sikhs.¹⁰⁸

A Punjab coalition Ministry was functioning but with the time communal tensions and conflicts were also progressing. Tension among communities more progressed when Sikandar tabled three bills in Assembly concerned with land and agriculture; main was related with Money- landers Act, next was about Mortgaged lands and last one was addressing the revision of the Land Alienation Act. First two

were against the landed aristocracy. Situation was remarkable for Akalis to counter the NKP among the community but they could not pressurize Government in the Assembly because of their lesser numbers. Even with the collaboration of all Sikh groups present in Assembly were not in position to safeguard and respond effectively on any moves against their community. Sikh aristocratic class was disturbed even than they were also part of ministry. Sikh leadership further distressed when Sikandar-Jinnah Pact signed. Its terms were not adequate for Sikhs. According to their view Unionists had surrendered party's non-communal status. Sikh-Government alliance could not prove fruitful for Sikhs except Sikhs could be secure a few amendments the in Gurdwara reforms Act in the following years.¹⁰⁹ They were demanding dismissal or at least amendments in the Land Alienation Act¹¹⁰ but their factional segregation in the legislative Council was great hurdle to achieve their demand.

Communal mindfulness flashed up Sikh-Muslim rift however some noteworthy steps were initiated in favour of Sikhs during the years of 1930s. In 1939, *Shaheed Gunj* handed over to the Sikhs. Other than The *Shaheed Gunj* Issue, Sikh striking against restriction on dressing up with Kirpan and sword, arguing on *Jhatka* and *Hilal*, and Muslims were arguing on against Music before the mosque so the Assembly continually been grim. Gurdwara Reforms and *Jhatka* Bills moved by S. Sampuran Singh and M.L.A S.Partap Singh but could not approve even than Sikh majority was in the favour of the bills.¹¹¹ Some Sikh and Muslim members who were with Unionist alliance also selected for ministries by Sikandar to retain non-communal status of Ministry and supported Sikhs for the claim of the Masjid *Shaheed Gunj* but all in vain communal tensions and rigidities could not be controlled.

Conclusion:

The Communal declaration of 1932 was announced. Apparently this official account was for to protect communal rights and political strength weightage principle of minorities in provincial and Center but practically this declaration created

gulf between communities and political advancement made difficult towards Indian nationalism because only religion was considered a scale to award representation weightage. All communities of Punjab reacted with zeal against the declaration but Sikhs showed more enthusiasm to secure their identity. Their lesser numbers compelled them to find alloys. As result all Sikh political parties should on same page and all factions should have forgot all their differences to fight for representation but Sikh factions merge with other communal groups. Consequently they achieved nothing despite their zealous reaction. Although in British took advantage of these communal difference and won the World War II with the assistance of the all Indian communities in general and communities from Punjab specifically. This Award also grew up differences among communities and within the communities and turned a nonviolent struggle for self-identity and right of constitutional representation into 'surgical operation' which resulted up as partition.

Through this declaration British sowed beads of communalism and promoted 'Divide and Rule' policy effectively. Sir Geoffrey Corbett plan regarding Punjab boundaries was not ultimate solution of Sikh problem but it was a plan to widened communal separatism in the Punjab. As for as Punjab concerned Muslims were happy with this declaration because they got majority of 62 percent and Hindu and Sikhs were not in position to compete with Muslims even they joined hands each other. Corbett proposal just flashed up Sikh leadership mind and they came up own modification plan for Punjab boundaries comprised with backbone areas Montgomery, Lyallpur and Lahore for economic growth. The Sikh community was divided in factions on their own proposals. In private meeting of Indian leaders Ujjal Singh showed his interest for 24 percent representation share in Punjab legislative in contrast to seventeen points but he was assumed insincere and two faced person so he turned back on 30 percent. Indian leaders' response in RTC gave a chance to British that they could be enforce their choice under Simon Commission Report. The Act 1935 was created under this Communal declaration. It could not get positive response from

Indians but ignoring all aversion and resistance it was imposed and planned elections 1937 under given representation weightage to Indian communities. In the Punjab, Sikhs were in serious trouble. Their creed towards goals and objectives, approaches to attain success were varied with each other. Congress and Akali coalition was could not be long lasting and fruitful because both were unable to get success in elections. The CAD and NKP were contested in election with pro- British approach and stood anti- Akali(SAD). Maharaja of Patiala showed disassociation with SAD SAD popularity graph fell down so and also lost its position in SGPC elections but matter of fact that not only SAD but all Sikh political parties and factions had lost their position, pressure and influence. Non-communal ministry of Punjab could not maintain peace and stability in Punjab politics. Bill regarding Land alienation Act further increased disturbance among aristocratic class. Sikh aristocratic class was part of Ministry so Ministry became in trouble. Furthermore Unionist had shaken belief and trust of other alloys of ministry when it lay down Muslim League arms and surrendered its non-communal status and supremacy under Sikandar-Jinnah agreement. *Shaheed Gunj*, *Jhatka* and Gurdawara Reform bills were tabled but could not be approved so resentment increased. Sikandar tried to appease Sikhs and went against Muslims on the *Shaheed Gunj* issue but conflicts increased bitterness between Sikhs and Muslims. The NKP and CAD as alloy of Unionist even having ministerial seat failed to get favours for Sikhs but SAD get chance and destabilized the KNP among Sikh masses.¹¹²

In short Sikhs factional division kept them away from success and they could not attain better concessions for the community. Their factional rivalries should be have eradicated and brain stormed that Congress alliance would not enough to achieve goal.

The Communal Declaration proved a last shot of cannon against the Indian nationalism. This piece of declaration paper not only parted the ways of all Indians but flashed up conflicts and insecurities within the communities as well. This Communal Declaration twisted the sparrows into hawks.

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