

Khalistan Movement: Cultural Trauma and Memory Identity

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ABSTRACT

The secessionist movement which became militant in the last quarter of twentieth century known as Khalistan movement was the result of Sikh grievances having traces in colonial India to loads in post-colonial India. The movement had a strict blow back in the decade of 1980s specifically post operation blue star and successive military operations conducted by the repressive state machinery of India. It lost the capital required for active insurgency which brings the study to a central riddle that how the movement persists despite collapsed material basis and organizational capacity. This paper intends to describe the persistence of the Khalistan movement by the institutionalization of trauma central to the political identity of Sikh community that is transmitted intergenerationally through various institutions in the domestic and international spheres. This trauma has become an integral part of collective consciousness of the Sikh community which cannot be deleted altogether by military incursions. This study has shifted the analysis from security-oriented explanations to memory recognition and identity gathering around trauma of 1984 Operation Blue Star.

Keywords: Khalistan Movement, Sikh Separatism, Collective Trauma, Intergenerational Memory, Sikh Political Identity, Operation Blue Star (1984), Insurgency, Historical Grievances, Collective Consciousness, Memory and Identity, State Repression, Sikh Diaspora.

INTRODUCTION

The Khalistan movement has its roots in pre partition era. The Sikhs mostly live in the northwestern Punjab and constitute around 2 percent of the Indian population. Initially, Sikhs proved their loyalty to the British by participating in the British Army. The 1919 Rowlatt's Act created a serious imbalance within British-Sikh equation when the British carried out brutal crimes against the protestors in Jallianwala Bagh on 13th April 1919. Moreover, in Punjab Legislative Assembly, 15 out of 93 seats were maintained for the Sikhs as per the government of India Act 1919 (Jetly, 2008). Despite the partition of Punjab, But the Sikhs demands were not met by this partition, and the Indian government resultantly divided the Punjab further into Punjab (majority Sikhs) and Haryana (majority Hindus) but even this would not fulfill their demands as the problem of division of river waters persisted. Party Politics is yet another factor which lead to the consolidation of Sikh identity towards Khalistan movement as there existed a tug of war between Indian National Congress, Bhartiya Janata Party and Akali Dal). The 1980 elections resulted in the ousting of Akali Dal and to remain relevant they resorted to street politics, produced a series of demands which were territorial and constitutional to the government within a year which if not met would result in mass level protests. During this period, separatists, extremists and moderates emerged out of Akali Dal. It was the extreme faction led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale which led to the demand of secession and initiated the Khalistan movement at the mass level. In 1983, some terrorists stopped a bus and killed all the Hindus which resulted in the

implementation of president's rule in the Punjab. Bhindranwale moved to the Akal Takht and stuffed it with food and weapons. Major General R S Brar was called to remove the terrorists who were residing in the Golden Temple and the operation code named as Blue Star was launched on June 5th, the purpose of which was to flush out the militants from the Temple in two days with minimum casualties. On

severe resistance received to Brar's whole plan, army tanks were deployed which continued firing the temple the whole day. The official accounts suggest the killings of 492 terrorists, 4 officers and 79 soldiers. Operation Blue Star hurt the religious sentiments of the Sikhs as their holiest sacred place was attacked by the state. It followed the killing of PM Indra Gandhi, who sanctioned the operation, by her two Sikh bodyguards on 31st June 1984 after which a massive violence erupted in the whole country against the Sikh community and the whole decade observed significant systematic state repression against them. The anti-Sikh riots take the toll of almost 2146 Sikhs killed in November in Delhi and 586 Sikhs killed in other areas. The decade of 1990s resulted in decline of Khalistan militancy as sustained securitization was underway, the networks were weakened through greater coordination between Punjab Police, CRPF, BSF and the Indian army. Key military operations were launched during this era including Operation Rakshak I & II, joint army and police operations and intensive patrolling and search operations. The internal capital for the Khalistan movement was destroyed as the diaspora support was not even flowing inside to keep the militancy uprooted. There was a series of cyclical securitization of the Khalistan issue which resulted in repressive state behavior against the Sikhs and the militancy got declined significantly in 1990s (Roychoudhury, 2014).

Khalistan movement experiences a recent upsurge in India with the rise of Amritpal Singh Sandhu who is named as Bhindranwale 2.0 in Indian media, the farmers rights movement and recent upsurge of internationalization of the Khalistan movement through diaspora mobilization by the Sikh diaspora in Canada, UK and USA which suggests that the movement still has some flames. Why does the Khalistan movement persist despite the collapse of armed insurgency limited internal capital including the territorial viability? The current literature focuses on state repression, security frameworks, political manipulation, economic grievances and Hindu majoritarian politics which help explain the escalation and decline of the insurgency, but they fail to explain the long-term symbolic persistence of the movement.

This study explains the persistence of movement as the function of institutionalization of the collective trauma of partition and 1984 operations and the operations that followed the memory of which was translated intergenerationally and the politically charged diaspora amplified that identity by internationalizing the movement. Although the state repression destroyed the insurgency's capital basis, the symbolic identity remained through institutionalization of collective trauma.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on Khalistan movement offers explanations of its persistence with various theoretical lenses including state repression, identity formulation, political economic and transnational diasporic mechanisms. Rajshtree Sethi organizes her explanation by giving the sociological understanding of the movement whereby centralization of power by Ms. Gandhi, congressional manipulation of the Akali Dal party and structural output in the form of

Bhindranwale, various economic inequalities, support from outside and usage of coercive force explains the separatist movement. Sreya Maitra Roychoudhury organizes her study around the Securitization theory of Copenhagen School of thought to the Punjab Crisis where she explained how the versification of Punjab as existential terrorist threat legitimized the use of coercive violence both physical and legal against the Sikh community in the form of AFSPA, Operation Blue Star and successive operations explaining the circularity of the securitization phenomenon.

A bunch of scholars including Prantik Basak, Dr. Rahul J. Nikam, Dr. Tripti Chowdhury, Debasree Pal, Jhilike Saha organize their study on the constructivist lens to explain the identity formulation of Sikh

Community through religious consciousness and explicit marginalization tracing the initial demands of separatism to colonial era injustices to foundational building of such ideas in post-colonial Indian state where their grievances were strengthened by the state activities which culminated finally into Sikh identity. Bunch of scholars such as Shakshi Sharma and Shivam Tiwary; Huraira Nawaz Cheema, Asfand Yar Hassan Sheikh, Saima Asghar, respectively in their studies explore the movement around diaspora politics where the movement breeds in the diasporic Sikh communities through digital mobilizations, lobbying, transnational activism and transnational networking. Shameul Tharu explained the movement through the lens of Ethno-secessionist movement being crushed by a securitizing actor whereby state normalizes the punitive measures it throngs upon the dissenting voices. Khatoon and Khan organizes their study around the regional dynamics of Khalistan movement and Samina Iqbal, Rukhsana Yasmeen, Kalsoom Hanif and Ghulam Shabbir trace the colonial underpinnings and aspects of the movement.

All these explanations and nuances focus either on security, political economic relations, identity politics or diaspora politics explanations but they lack explaining the persistence of movement explaining the trauma institutionalization of the memory, how trauma and memory serve as anchoring point which ensure the stability of identity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The concept of collective memory entered historical studies in first quarter of 20th century mainly due to work of Maurice Halbwachs who first coined the term “collective memory”. His main thesis was that even though we remember as individuals, what and how we remember, is dictated by the relevant communities we belong to our memories are also preserved and strengthened by public commemorations and celebrations of events that play a central role in the self-identification of the relevant community. Collective memory might be achieved through history, myths or combination of the two. History might be true, false or fake. The difference between fake and real is that the Fake history is the mere presentation of false evidence about specific people, groups or events and myths are supposed to have universal dimensions, and they refer to the origins, identities and core qualities of relevant communities or even the whole humanities. Collective memory functions through symbols, for instance symbolic dates like 4th of July, symbolic objects as flags, symbolic texts as folk tales, symbolic activities as folk dances and traditions. Even in cases where the historical variety of these symbolic elements can't be verified, they are accepted as true by the members of the groups. For example, 25th of December is considered the birth of Christ but we know now that it's not registered in any earlier Christian text as the birth of Christ but reality as that it was celebrated in Roman empire as the birthday of Solin Victus and other gods. It was only later that the Christian church used this date as the birthday of holy Christ. Since the 1990s the German Egyptologist and cultural scholar Jan Assmann has revitalized the discussion on collective memory building on cultural memory. Both collective memory and cultural memory claim what an individual chooses to remember and how the individual remembers, whatever he or she remembers is not his choice but cultural social or political product that is dictated to each one of us. Sometimes our memories are influenced by small family members or circle of friends. Other memories are influenced by far larger groups like nations. All memories are related to identities, and any identity is influenced by the communities one is related to.

Cultural Trauma

Cultural Trauma is a theoretical nuance that explains trauma not as an individual natural psychological event but as a construction of collectivity when it defines its identity. Jeffery Alexander coined this term as he suggested that for any problematic event to become a cultural trauma, it requires the community to implicitly decide that it has struck “indelible mark upon the group consciousness” (Alexander, 2004). There are four key explaining variables of this theory including the shift from to sociological trauma that explains that trauma is not a natural event but a sociological drama where communities discuss the nuances and make it trauma. This drama needs a carrier group which creates the master narrative like a story of what happened, who was the victim, what has to do with the target audience which was

notevenpresent at the time of trauma induction and who can be blamed ultimately. This drama is then played out on institutional platforms involving religious, legal, aesthetic or mass media components in it and a new collective identity finally is carved out of this whole sociological process. Just as Holocaust was socialized by doing all these steps. In this study, the events around 1984 Operation Blue Star and subsequently the riots create such a rupture around which the whole trauma is socialized by the relevant Sikh community which is transmitted intergenerationally.

MODEL

The mechanism which I will be following in the paper would be Trauma → Institutionalized Memory → Identity Preservation Methodology. This study employs a qualitative interpretive research methodology which has relied mainly on the secondary literature (Sikh Formations and Peer reviewed Journal articles). This study relies on conceptual analysis of the Khalistan movement under the theoretical auspices of cultural trauma and collective memory frameworks to explain the intergenerational transmission of trauma and memory through institutionalization. It undertakes case interpretation by taking Operation Blue Star 1984 and is taken as main historical case along which the memory practices are described. It has certain limitations as well as being interpretive, lacks primary interviews, relied mostly on published data.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Partition Anxiety

Political awareness arose in last decades of 19th century in British India among various communities. Congress was established in 1885 from which Muslims had kept themselves separate recognizing it as overwhelmingly Hindu centered political party. In 1906, after the Bengal episode, Muslim League was also created which represented the Muslim interests. There were several other parties that were operating at provincial level specially in Punjab including Ahrar, Khaksar, Arya Samaj, Shuddi, Sangthan, Sikh Sabhas, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Central League and Akali Dal. During the war of independence, the Sikhs showed their loyalty to the British after which they received favors from them, got recruited in the army and entrance in the courts. In 1973, at Amritsar, the Singh Sabha Association was created as a religious reform movement (Talbot, 2006). Sikhs became the natural allies of British as their distinctness as a separate community was recognized initially by governor generals like John Lawrence and Lord Dufferin. Chief Khalsa Diwan was established by Sunder Singh Majithia, Central Sikh League and Shiromani Akali Dal in 1902, 1919 and 1920 respectively.

Sikhs were attracted to both anti-imperialism and religious zeal as the Akali Dal was formed to secure the Gurdwaras and Master Tara Singh emerged as its leader who opposed the idea of Pakistan severely. Sikhs consolidated themselves in the following years, but factionalism dominated their politics as educated elite was at the leadership end of the Sikh political community, but landed gentry still dominated the politics creating communal consciousness (Josh, 1995). They demanded weightage in Punjab, the readjustment of Punjab boundaries, returning Ranjit Singh's Punjab to Sikhs against Pakistan resolution, and finally a separate Sikh state in 1946 after Akali Dal passing a resolution (Kapur, 1985). Sikhs considered themselves to be betrayed by both the Congress as adequate representation was not guaranteed in the Nehru report after working with Congress's Civil disobedience and non-cooperation movements. Similarly, the Communal Award too cornered the Sikhs in worst condition in Punjab, the Ramsay MacDonald Award 1932 also not provided adequate representation to Sikhs according to their population in electorates (K. Singh, 1991) thus sowing the seeds of betrayal and separation. The Sikhs agreed to the partition of Punjab because they were politically less advantageous as their population was just 550,000 as compared to the Muslims who were 900,000 in numbers and the Sikhs were not concentrated but dispersed in the region therefore, they had to reluctantly accept the partition of Punjab in 1947. But the Sikhs demands were not met by this partition and there persisted the demands of separate Punjabi Suba as is evident by initiatives like PEPSU in 1948. The Indian government resultantly divided the Punjab in 1966 further on linguistic grounds into Punjab (majority

Sikhs with Punjabi language) and Haryana (majority Hindus with Hindi language) (M.Singh, 1988). Even this would not fulfill their demands as the contention was the status of Chandigarh as union territory of both Punjab and Haryana was disliked by Sikhs along with water distribution between them was considered unfair. Therefore, in early postcolonial India, identity insecurity was already deep rooted among Sikh community. Intensification of Sikhs anger was also a function of party politics in Punjab where Akali Dal and Congress regularly tussled and tried to capture the political power. The real frustration of Akali Dal was that it was supported by Jatt Sikhs and Urban Sikhs only, it didn't enjoy the support of all the Sikhs. On the other hand, the Congress's support base of Hindus, Scheduled Castes and rural Sikhs. Aggressive centralization was pursued by Mrs. Gandhi resulting in president's rule in nine Punjabi states in 1980 and the masterstroke played by Congress was the cultivation of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to breakdown the support base of Akali Dal and Janata Sangh. He was a great orator with religious outlook, knowing the Sikh literature, considered Sikhs a martial race and capitalized on these emotions in public gatherings. He soon played against both the Congress and Akali Dal. On 28th December 1973, Akali Dal passed Anandpur Sahib Resolution addressing economic, religious and ethnic demands of the Sikhs which were not secessionist in nature but asked for greater autonomy, jurisdiction of law and administration, Chandigarh's transfer to Punjab and the water redistribution favoring Punjab. But it was not guaranteed by the Congress which resulted in strengthening of grievance against the government.

The Cultural Trauma

The crisis took religious turn when the Akali Dal used religion to frame their demands which provided the framework of militancy the province. 1978 can be taken as the main anchor point for Sikh fundamentalism when Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale presented himself as religious leader of the Sikh community. The failure of central government and Akali Dal reaching any possible political settlement strengthened Bhindranwale who fumed against the central government. In this time, his visibility increased as the message was transferred through Sikh educational and religious centers to the community and killer squads were also maintained to destroy the enemies of Sikhs. Bhindranwale described the Sikhs as fighters and wanted them to follow Guru Goband Singh's footsteps. He wanted the implementation of Anandpur Sahib Resolution in its letter and spirit. He banned tobacco sales in Amritsar upon which the Hindu merchants protested whom he took 20000-armed Sikhs to crush the protest which was dispersed out of fear. He attacked both Hindus (that they are corrupt) and modernized Sikhs (Guha 2015). He rose to such heights by the providence of Union Home Minister Zail Singh and Sanjay Gandhi because the central government wanted to weaken the Akali Dal and prepare an even more extremist rebel. Several killings of important political personalities took place in 1980s including Baba Gurucharan Singh and Lala Jagat Narain who were against Sikh separatism and Bhindranwale was suspicious for these murders. He surrendered himself, got relief from the court and emerged as the victorious Sikh leader who defeated the Indian government. In 1983, some terrorists stopped a bus and killed all the Hindus which resulted in the implementation of president's rule in the Punjab. Bhindranwale moved to the Akal Takht and stuffed it with food and weapons. Major General R S Brar was called to remove the terrorists who were residing in the Golden Temple and the operation code named as Blue Star was launched on June 5th, the purpose of which was to flush out the militants from the Temple in two days with minimum casualties. On severe resistance received to Brar's whole plan, army tanks were deployed which continued firing the temple the whole day. The official accounts suggest the killings of 492 terrorists, 4 officers and 79 soldiers. Operation Blue Star hurt the religious sentiments of the Sikhs as their holiest sacred place was attacked by the state. It followed the killing of PM Indra Gandhi, who sanctioned the operation by her two Sikh bodyguards on 31st June 1984 after which a massive violence erupted in the whole country against the Sikh community and the whole decade observed significant systematic state repression against them. The anti-Sikh riots take the toll of almost 2146 Sikhs killed in November in Delhi and 586 Sikhs killed in other areas.

Post 1984 triggered a policy reevaluation in the government circles which consisted of both force (against the violent sections of the community) and reconciliation for reinstating normalcy. Rajeev Gandhi favored a conciliatory approach recognized the fault of previous government on attacking the

holy site of Sikhs, and signed an accord with Sant Longwal who in 1985, was made the head of Akali Dal. He was a pacifist, more in favor of Hindu Sikh peace and declared that separatism was not in favor of Khalistan (Sharma, 1992). The accord agreed to establish institutional mechanisms for Chandigarh issue and effective water distribution but after a few weeks of accord Longwal was also killed by the extremist factions. Surjeet Singh Barnala, who was the successor of Longwal was dismissed even after negotiating with both the center and the extremist factions which according to Hamish Telford was clearly the mistake on center's part for not implementing the accord timely. It was used by the extremist faction of Sikhs (the hardliners) to revive militancy in the region. It was the short sightedness on Congress's part that they delayed the settlements and the President's rule was again implemented on 11 May 1987 just when the elections were on the edge for Haryana Assembly. Military operations such as Woodrose (1986-1987) and Black thunder (1988) were launched to tackle the militancy, but it backlashed with more grievances. The decade of 1990s resulted in decline of Khalistan militancy as sustained securitization was underway, the networks were weakened through greater coordination between Punjab Police, CRPF, BSF and the Indian army. Key military operations were launched during this era including Operation Rakshak I & II, joint army and police operations and intensive patrolling and search operations. The internal capital for the Khalistan movement was destroyed as the diaspora support was not even flowing inside to keep the militancy uprooted. There was a series of cyclical securitization of the Khalistan issue which resulted in repressive state behavior against the Sikhs and the militancy got declined significantly in 1990s (Roychoudhury, 2014). The Operation Blue Star served as memory anchor of the Sikh community because the military action shifted the collective memory of the Sikhs transcending the physical damage to the story of spiritual martyrdom. The Operation Blue Star was reframed as parallel to Ghallugharas which were considered the Holocaust of 1746 (The Chota Ghallughara) and 1762 (The Wadda Ghallughara). The 1984 was seen as the third Ghallughara. On June 6, 2021, at 37th anniversary of Operation Blue Star, raising the slogans of 'Khalistan Zindabad', Jathedar Akal Takht Giani Harpreet Singh said on the military action as per state orders, "The Army action was comparable to a war between two nations. It was like a country attacking another nation" (2021, June 6, *The Hindu*). Ardas prayers are offered to remember and honor all those who died during the events of 1984 at the Golden Temple and it is institutionalized by the apex Sikh body SGPC. The martyr memorial and Central Sikh Museum serve as the main reference points for these commemorations having portraits of leaders like Bindranwale and Shabegh Singh. Sikh formations have been publishing various articles, conducting various workshops and conferences on the topics like 1984, ethno nationalism of Sikhs which suggest that the Operation Blue Star is not a past event but a lived memory (Mandair, 2015). Diaspora has served a great cause to the movement institutionalizing as memory for they provided counter narrative to the state version of terrorism and legitimizing coercion against them. For instance, on 31st October 2024, the World Sikh Organization called the Canadian parliament to recognize the 1984 as genocide. They wrote, "As you know, the 1984 Sikh Genocide is an issue that continues to matter to Sikh Canadians. Thousands of Sikhs were killed across India in state-orchestrated massacres. Over the course of just six days, tens of thousands of Sikhs lost their lives while many more were rendered refugees, with the destruction of Sikh homes, businesses, and gurdwaras. Electoral lists were used to identify Sikh families and homes; state-rationed kerosene was used to burn Sikhs alive, and the police and army actively facilitated the massacres and, in some cases, even engaged in attacks on Sikhs. Those responsible for planning and organizing the killings have not been brought to justice. The Government of India's Nanavati Commission Report acknowledged "but for the backing and help of influential and resourceful persons, killing of Sikhs so swiftly and in large numbers could not have happened." (World Sikh Organization of Canada, 2024). Therefore, 1984 was institutionalized as memory anchor of a cultural trauma through commemorations, writings, andras, conferences and what not.

Intergenerational Transmission

Kamal Nath was appointed as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh in 2018 National Assembly elections. But this backlashed in the media circles like the Hindu and the Tribune, as he is associated with the anti-Sikh riots that took place after Indra Gandhi's assassination asking for his removal from the key political position which suggests that 1984 is not a mere past event but a lived memory. The communal

violence of 1984 pogrom is still remembered by Sikhs in Punjab and serves as shorthand for the symbolization and memorialization of the trauma inflicted over Sikhs during the pogrom. The people of Amritsar were residing in the houses throughout the curfew that was held during the Operation Blue Star and when the curfew was ended, people rushed to the Golden Temple upon hearing the mourners. Women started doing siyapa (lamenting) after having a glimpse of the broken Takht and dead bodies. It serves as anchor point for yearly commemorations and Sikhs still come to the Golden Temple to pay tribute to the martyrs of 1984. Punjabis usually use the word 'hurt punchya' or 'feel hoya' to explain the pain inflicted deliberately or an attack on the sentiments at communal level (Chopra, 2010). The events of 1984 produced enormous hurt to the Sikh maryada (dignity) by attacking the shell of the Akal Takht by a grenade launcher that was felt by sangat (all the members of the Sikh community that happens to be sacred). Despite all other violence inflicted on Sikhs in anti Sikh riots and various other operations, the pivot of remembrance and commemoration becomes the attack on Sri Darbar Sahib which was considered blasphemous by the Sikhs and still is remembered as hurt. There is also an element of polarization of memories as the death of Bhindranwale is not remembered in isolation but with other deaths as well. The deaths of other Sikhs and most importantly the death of Indra Gandhi. On one side, there is state narrative that operation was necessary to culminate the terrorists like Bhindranwale residing in the Golden Temple. On the other side, the Sikh memory is that the death of Indra Gandhi was a revenge of the events of 1984. The state sponsored memorial has its own political implications while the local memorials are suppressed but that can be resurfaced later. There is no cremated memorial of Bhindranwale as he was considered uggarwadi by the state. The government refused to create a memorial site for him, but his followers also refused to believe that he was dead. In 2004, Damdami Taksal which is a seminary being headed by Bhindranwale, declared that Bhindranwale was chardi kala (high spirits) and refused to perform any kind of bhog or Antim Ardas (mourning rituals). The emotional anchor of the cultural shock was the destroyed dome of the Golden temple which remained there for years and became the part of memory of Sikhs which is commemorated by the people on divided lines across the community on June 6. The State also managed the memory by inviting photojournalists just after the operation to show weapons inside the temple just to blame the Sikhs extremist for the operation. They wanted to rebuild the temple as soon as possible, but many Sikhs wanted the temple to remain as it is to symbolize the state repression. Baba Santa Singh was also appointed by the government to initiate the rebuilding process, but Sikhs opposed him, curfew was again launched and section 144 was implemented in the city. When the army left the temple, Sikhs flooded the temple raised the slogans of Khalistan and Bhindranwale which suggested that he has become a lived memory now. In 1986, on Indian republic day, the Sikhs demolished the government made temple and rebuilt it again (Chopra, 2010). Post 1986, the government stopped banning commemorations and the Sikhs started celebrating the memories once again this time embedding memory-oriented rituals. The Sikh pilgrims now started coming every year on June 6 to remember their loved ones. For instance, Dalip Singh, a pilgrim who commemorates his father-in-law which combines the trauma of collectivity with the personal loss of individual Sikhs. The June 6 of 1995 was declared as Ghallughar Diwas which is symbolically very important meaning thereby a Holocaust inflicted upon Sikhs. Ghallughar basically refers to the massacres on 18th century Sikh communities by the Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Durrani. The Golden Temple becomes a stage for collective memory, trauma and shock. There are several memorial tablets in which inscriptions are made such that it symbolizes what to remember by the pilgrims who come every year to visit them. In one tablet, in roman English it is written, 'Its building was pulled down several times in the 18th century by the MUGHAL ARMY and AFGAN raiders. In June 1984, the Indian Army under OPERATION BLUESTAR destroyed and desecrated it. But each time the die-hard Sikhs sacrificed their lives while contesting the assailants and rebuild (sic) it with great enthusiasm'. Here, Operation blue star is highlighted with emphasis and is paralleled with the Mughal and Afghan raiders attacking the Akal Takht. The memory is put forward and joined by the monumental tablets and relics, galleries and exhibition rooms of the museum. For instance, there are writings in the museum which discuss the burning of old writings, paintings and sacred things which were present in the Akal Takht before the Operation and the resultant fire. There are portraits of the Sikh fighters who are described as died while fighting for the Sikh maryada. But there is no portrait, relic or even mentioning of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in the Akal Takht who symbolized the whole Khalistan movement. It might be the reason that state has rendered him a terrorist and there could be a fear among Sikh community for mentioning

him. But Bhindranwale is commemorated on social media where people especially from diaspora celebrate him as the spiritual leader of the movement. The Never Forget rallies of the Sikh diaspora in West London against the Operation Blue Star which began in Southall, Havelock Road and then Trafalgar Square. In Hounslow College, genocide week was celebrated (Southall Gazette, June 14, 1985).

CONCLUSION

This paper begins with a puzzle of Khalistan movement that despite collapse of the struggle and the limited or even scarce capital and territorial feasibility why the Khalistan movement persists. The existing studies explain the role of state repression, exploitation, Hindutva majoritarian politics etc. in describing the various phases of insurgency but they don't explain the symbolic appraisal of Khalistan movement in such a long-term cycle. By using the trauma and memory perspectives, this study offers that the continued persistence of Khalistan movement is deeply embedded in the political identity of Sikhs via institutionalization of the cultural trauma. The repressive mechanisms used by the state in 1984 Operation Blue Star and subsequent operations resulted in the collapse of armed struggle, the military, economic and social capital for the movement to survive however the symbolic persistence of the memory could not be eliminated completely since ideas never die. The 1984 served as cultural shock and trauma to the Sikh community of India since their holiest spiritual and religious place was militarily attacked and thousand of Sikhs were brutally massacred by the Indian state, this trauma was institutionally transmitted intergenerationally via religious symbols, practices, commemorations, martyr stories and even diasporic communities. The diasporic communities even internationalized the Khalistan movement around the ideas of self determination and human rights. Currently the movement is not grounded in territorial insurgency but more based on moral, symbolic, memory-based anchors with international recognition in various countries including UK and US wherever the diasporic communities have their significant presence. By looking into the Khalistan movement through the collective memory and cultural trauma allows us to transcend the traditional security-oriented discourses. It highlights that the repression by any state against any movement can destroy the material basis of that movement but the identity around the symbols remains intact and the movements may begin at even deeper level. This further broadens the ideas of nationalism and conflicts where material defeats cannot delete political identities which are strengthened by narratives of remembrance which can even mobilize people time and again.

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