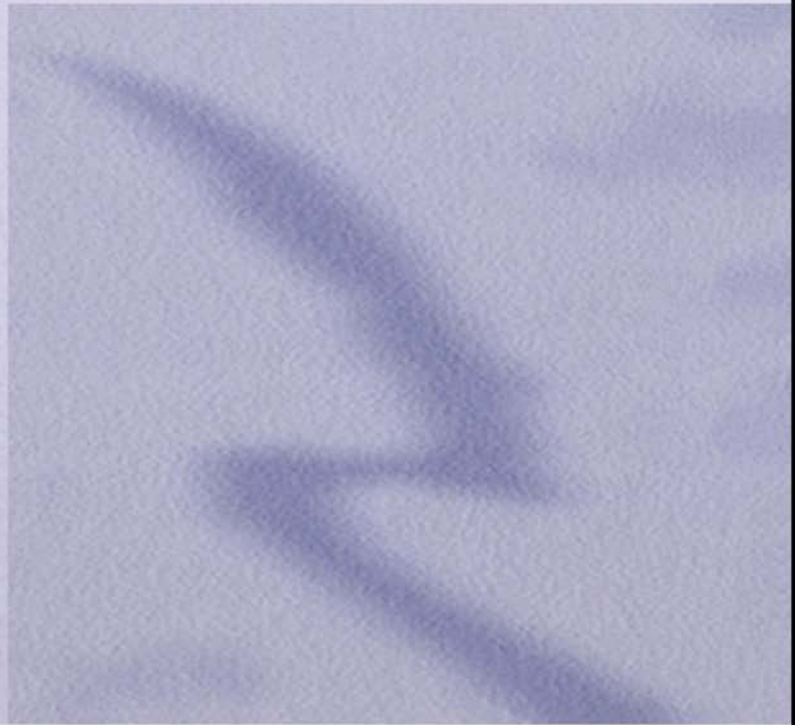


Religion and Nationalism in India

The case of the Punjab

Harnik Deol

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group



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**To the memory of
my father**

Sardar M.S. Deol (1931–94)

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	v
<i>Preface and acknowledgements</i>	vi
Introduction	1
1 The trouble with classic theories of nationalism	8
2 The contradictory unity of the Indian state	30
3 The historical roots of Sikh communal consciousness (1469–1947)	56
4 The rise of Sikh national consciousness (1947–95)	92
5 The agrarian crisis and the rise of armed resistance: the socio-economic impact of the green revolution	125
6 Transformation in social communication and religious controversy: dialogues in vernacular languages	149
Conclusion	173
<i>Notes</i>	177
<i>Bibliography</i>	191
<i>Index</i>	199

Illustrations

Maps

1.1	General map of the Punjab	10
4.1	The Punjabi <i>suba</i> and neighbouring provinces	97
4.2	Post-1966 Punjab	99

Tables

2.1	States where national religious minorities are a majority	33
5.1	Consumption of chemical fertilizers in Punjab	129
5.2	Net irrigated area in Punjab	129
5.3	Irrigated area in Punjab (1991–2)	129
5.4	Consumption of electric power in agriculture as a percentage of total consumption	130
5.5	The production of wheat and rice in Punjab and India	130
5.6	Contribution to central pool	130
5.7	Classification of land holdings	133
5.8	Age composition of the activists	141
5.9	Education level of the activists	142
5.10	Family land holdings (ownership) of the activists	142
5.11	Caste background of the activists	142
5.12	Age composition of the activists	143
5.13	Education level of the activists	143
5.14	Family land holdings (ownership) of the activists	143
5.15	Caste background of the activists	143
5.16	Short-term agricultural loans	145
6.1	Percentage of literacy in total population	151
6.2	Circulation figures of the four major newspapers in Punjab in 1991	153
6.3	History of the Punjab press	154
6.4	Total readership (in thousands) of individual newspapers in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal-Pradesh	158
6.5	Readers of newspapers in urban and rural areas	158
6.6	Education levels of readers	158
6.7	Figures for the <i>Punjab Kesari</i> newspaper	159
6.8	Household income of newspaper readers	159
6.9	Figures for the <i>Punjab Kesari</i> newspaper	159
6.10	Occupational breakdown of newspaper readers	160

Preface and acknowledgements

India is a subcontinent, with a population of over 900 million, covering a wide range of ecological zones. The countless linguistic and religious groupings if not engaged in open conflict are on the verge of it. The many ethnonationalist movements there have generated a growing concern among social scientists in recent years. The aim of this book is to ascertain the vital conditions and processes that give rise to ethnic conflict in contemporary India, and to place these developments in a broader historical context. The research is also an attempt to recast the theory of nationalism and purge it of its Eurocentric and élitist bias. In my view, an adequate theoretical comprehension of nationalism outside Europe has to come to terms with Asian institutions and history.

Any attempt to encompass so vast a theme is bound to be selective. This book, which is a substantially revised version of my PhD thesis presented at the London School of Economics in 1996, therefore concentrates on the Punjab and gives a detailed account of the development of the Sikh movement for an independent state in India. My choice of the Sikh case has been influenced by the fact that I belong to the Punjab and am most familiar with its history and events. My interest in the subject was stimulated by the turmoil in the Punjab in the 1980s. This involvement may help to explain some of the biases and the choice of this specific case.

As will be apparent to the reader, two books have deeply influenced my comprehension of nationalism. The first book is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and the other book is the classic work by Barrington Moore Jr, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

I am grateful to Oxford University Press, New Delhi, for permission to reproduce Map 1.1.

I have benefited enormously from the guidance and support of my supervisors, Anthony D. Smith and the late Alfred Gell. The examiners of the original thesis—James Mayall and Dennis Austin—helped me clarify some of the shortcomings. This research would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of my family in India and my friends in London. Finally, my mother, Ravinder, is always a source of inspiration and strength, which has made this book possible.

Harnik Deol
March 2000

Introduction

South Asia today presents a mosaic of artificial administrative entities left behind by the British imperial power. In the half-century since independence, the stability of the post-colonial state in South Asia has been threatened by recurrent and violent conflict between the central authorities and a variety of ethnic minorities. The Muhajir uprising in Pakistan, Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka, tribal insurgency in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, montagnard irredentism in Indian Kashmir and Sikh separatism in India present a congeries of contemporary breakaway movements in the Indian subcontinent.

India's complex social structure presents a kaleidoscopic cultural universe, a plethora of regional distinctions, a motley complex of traditions, and nearly 500 languages and dialects are spoken by nearly 900 million people (Van der Veer 1994:165). It is indeed remarkable that this broad cultural ensemble is subsumed under a central political authority, which is itself an artificial administrative entity. It is natural for these diverse ethnic groups to assert their cultural identity. The principal bases of identity assertion perceived as threats to the national state in India are religion, language and tribe. Soon after India's independence in 1947, the foremost controversy to push India to the brink of civil disorder was the linguistic issue. However, the carving of territorial units based on language resolved the language issue in the 1950s and 1960s. Since the 1980s, it is assertions of religious identity, particularly in conjunction with territorial bases, that have afflicted the Indian national state. The Sikh demand for an independent state and the Muslim claims for autonomy in Kashmir are the two foremost movements for political secession in contemporary India that possess both religious and territorial bases. According to one survey, the destruction, in terms of the number of people who have lost their lives and the damage caused to public property, wrought by these conflicts is far worse than the destruction caused by the three IndoPakistan wars (*The Tribune*, 15 November 1995). These internal wars for political secession are the subject of this study, and the Sikh movement for sovereignty in India is the central example.

When considering the Sikh unrest, two important facts must be borne in mind. First, Punjab has progressively shrunk in size over the last half-century.

The Punjab province today occupies only a fraction of the area it occupied in the first half of the twentieth century. Secondly, since 1966 the cultural

distinctiveness of Punjab is provided by the fact that a majority of its population is Sikh. This fact acquires a particular significance when it is remembered that the Sikhs are a national minority, at the same time enjoying a distinctive history and cultural identity, and consistently claiming a heritage entirely different from that of either Hindus, with whom they have no history of antagonism, or from Muslims, with whom they have a history of powerful antagonistic struggles. The Sikhs are a people objectively distinct in religion, though not in language, from other ethnic groups in the north, who have succeeded in acquiring a high degree of internal social and political cohesion and subjective self-awareness, and who have achieved political significance as a group within the Indian Union (Brass 1974:277). The Punjabi-speaking Sikhs seemingly possess the classic ingredients of nationality formation: a geographical region, an arena of history and language linked to culture, and a religious ideology. Moreover, Punjab is the granary of India and is the richest state in India, with an average income of ₹220 per year. Punjab has borders with Pakistan and the Kashmir region; therefore, it is a region of strategic importance. Events that take place within its borders constitute another perspective on the future of Indian polity and society. Most importantly, a land of remarkable cultural diversity, Punjab, as is well known, is an example of change and transformation. Examples of new forms of collective consciousness, social movements and intellectual ferment abound and enable the social scientist to explore these societal tensions.

Located at the north-eastern margins of India, the region of Punjab has been the gateway into the Indo-Gangetic plains for invaders over the last three millennia. The northern boundary of Punjab was marked by the vast Himalayan mountains, while the river Indus in the west demarcated the western border of the province, and the river Yamuna marked the eastern boundary separating Punjab from the Gangetic plains. Extending from the foothills of the Himalayas, the Punjab is an extensive plain sloping gently down from the snow-clad mountains in the north and the west towards the scorching deserts in the south.

The name Punjab, meaning 'the land of five rivers', is based on the five feeder rivers—Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej—which once flowed through Punjab. At present, the topography of Punjab is etched by only three of the major five rivers, which have created three intrafluvial tracts. These internal physiographic zones have influenced many of the internal cultural and regional cleavages among the Sikhs. The region enclosed between the river Ravi and the river Sutlej is the Majha region. The Majha is often considered to be the 'cradle of Sikhism' because of the presence of major Sikh shrines and pilgrimage centres associated with the Sikh gurus. Vigorous campaigns associated with the Sikhs have often proliferated in this territory. Between the river Beas and the river Sutlej lies the narrow fertile tract of Doaba, also known as the garden of Punjab. The territory enclosed between the river Sutlej and the river Chenab is the Malwa region. This territory never became part of Lahore state under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Under British suzerainty, several Sikh chiefs of Malwa had to cede their dominions to the imperial rulers. Here it is useful to note that in

its initial phase the Sikh unrest was confined to the Majha area. However, as the Sikh movement gained momentum, the Majha and the Malwa regions became the main areas of resistance. Some attribute this to the proximity of these areas to the border with Pakistan, which allows an easy escape route, whereas others have emphasized the history and tradition associated with each socio-geographic region.

This fertile region, roughly triangular in shape, had formed part of the ancient Indus Valley civilization in the third millennium before Christ, when Dravidian city-states had dotted the Indus Valley. Scholars cannot agree whether the Aryan invaders swept the region in the second millennium before Christ or whether they established small republics all over Punjab. It was in Punjab that Vedic Hinduism flourished and many classic Sanskrit works written. Not only did the Vedic Aryans evolve a new system of religious belief and practice, but they also established the social system based on caste. The dark-skinned Dravidians were relegated to the unprivileged status of *dasas*, 'or slaves'. The Sikhs of Punjab are believed to have descended from the Aryan settlers. Indologists widely agree that Indian civilization was among the oldest in the world and its cradle was in Punjab. During the fourth century before Christ, Greek armies under Alexander swept across Punjab and imprinted an unmatched artistic pattern on the land. Soon after Alexander's departure, the Punjab was brought under the rule of the powerful Mauryan empire. During this period, Buddhism came to dominate the religious life of the people of Punjab. In the second century before Christ, the Greek king Menander established his power in Punjab; Greek coins bear testimony to the Hellenic influence in Punjab.

A series of invasions by Arab, Afghan, Turkish and Persian conquerors from the seventh century was to leave an Islamic imprint on the land and its people. In the mid-eighteenth century the Afghan invaders successfully separated the province of Punjab from the remainder of India. This conquest was followed by the establishment of the vast Sikh empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh during the eighteenth century. Sikh political power collapsed on 29 March 1849 with the British conquest of Punjab after two Anglo-Sikh wars. The independence of India in 1947 and the sanguinary partition of British Punjab between India and Pakistan, on the basis of Hindu and Muslim majority areas, resulted in the massive reorganization of the territorial boundaries of Punjab. In September 1966, the Punjab province was further trifurcated under the Punjab State Reorganization Bill. The southern, Hindispeaking, plain districts were formed into a new state of Haryana, the other Hindi-speaking hill districts to the north of Punjab were merged with neighbouring Himachal Pradesh, and the remaining Punjabi-speaking areas formed the new state of Punjab. At present, the geographical area of Punjab is 5,033,000 hectares and the population is 20,190,795, of which 70.28 per cent is rural and 29.72 is urban. Further, 36.93 per cent of the population is Hindu and 60.75 per cent is Sikh according to the figures provided in the Statistical Abstract of Punjab for 1991–2.

Aims and methods

The book traces the transition of the Sikhs from a religious congregation in the sixteenth century into an ethnic community in the eighteenth century, and from an ethnic community into a nation in the late twentieth century. The aim of the book is to analyse some of the historic conditions and processes that gave rise to ethno-nationalist movements in late-industrializing societies such as India. The method used here is largely historical. I have presented a general historical account of the evolution of the Sikh community using secondary sources for the earlier period (1469–1947) and a mixture of primary and secondary sources for the later period (1947–95). Among the primary sources consulted are important resolutions and minutes of meetings of the major political party in Punjab, the Akali Dal. In addition, speeches and letters written by Akali Dal leaders have been examined. I have found newspaper reports and editorials on significant events in Punjab since the 1970s particularly useful. These data are augmented by empirical research involving in-depth interviews with representatives of three sections of the Punjabi population, namely the politicians, newspaper editors and the Sikh activists involved in the movement for secession. These interviews were conducted during fieldwork in Punjab between October 1992 and April 1993. I am indebted to Mr S.S. Bal for providing me with valuable information and data on the Sikh guerrillas. These sources are supplemented by statistical data from government sources concerning the socio-economic development of Punjab. The research also explores statistical data on circulation figures and the readership profiles of major newspapers in Punjab. Among the secondary data I have found historical accounts, tracts and books written on the Sikhs during the pre-colonial and colonial period particularly useful.

Historical analysis, however, takes us only some of the way towards an understanding of Sikh nation formation. It needs to be supplemented by a sociological analysis of the social base of separatist movements in contemporary India. Here, I focus on two key aspects of the social base: the agricultural revolution and the revolution in communications, both of which occurred from the 1960s onwards. Together these help to explain the timing of the transition to the later phase of Sikh nationalism with its central demand for an independent Sikh state.

This book is not about class structure or economic variables, except where they impinge on the transition to Sikh nationhood. The hypothesis is that three hitherto unrelated sets of factors account for the evolution of the Sikh community. The first is economic, notably the green revolution; the second is social communications, notably the vernacular press; and the third is the religious ideals of the Sikh community, notably the emphasis on the community of warriors and martyrs. My argument is that the conjunction of these sets of factors helps us to understand the nature and timing of the evolution of the Sikh nation formation.

The questions that my research raises include, first, some specific questions relating to the contemporary Sikh unrest. If the demand for a separate Sikh state is a recent phenomenon, then the obvious question is why have the Sikhs articulated this demand only recently? What were the conditions and processes that gave rise to Sikh ethno-nationalism? What is the nature of this ethno-nationalism? Second, at a more general level, the questions that are relevant for this purpose include: How do objectively distinct ethnic groups become subjectively conscious political communities? Why do people feel loyalty to their nation as well as their family, region, class and religion? What are the historical roots of Sikh ethnic nationalism? What is the social base of ethno-nationalist movements? How does the transformation in communication facilitate ethnic consciousness?

Here I attempt to develop a conceptual framework within which to seek an understanding of Sikh ethno-nationalism, and therefore I first consider the classic modernization theories of nationalism ([Chapter 1](#)). By linking the emergence of nationalism to the industrial transformation in Western Europe, classic theories of nationalism formulate a universal model of nationalism. This model overlooks the specific impact of colonialism and the cultural and historical specificities of non-Western state formation. In the effort to identify the specific historical conditions, the deeper social processes by which nations came to be imagined in the colonial context, the first chapter will explore the distinctive nature, growth and scope of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle in India.

Several questions underpin this endeavour to explain Sikh ethnonationalism by drawing on the pattern of India's distinctive historical, religious and social experience. In particular, how does religion continue to be the dominant social bond that defines the characteristics of the Indian nation? How do religious identity assertions pose a grave threat to the Indian national state? What factors account for the emergence of religion as a crucial element in the politics of contemporary India? If the much noted religious renaissance in India is not merely a reassertion of religious piety, is it possibly what scholars refer to as a reassertion of nationalism rather than religion? What are the key features of religious nationalist movements? What are the factors that account for the resurgence of religious nationalism at this moment in India's history? Systems of life and thought have critical implications for modern politics because they regulate social life and predispose a society towards a distinctive pattern of state formation. [Chapter 2](#) first presents a discussion of the central cultural beliefs of Indian civilization. This is followed by a consideration of the historical context in which religion and modern democratic institutions have colluded in India. Finally, the emerging pattern of religion and politics in India and the resurgence of religious nationalism will be considered. Given the vast territorial, cultural and historical complexity of India, it would be misleading to examine the emergence of Hindu religious nationalism as a single phenomenon. The discussion will hinge on those themes that are relevant to the understanding of the emergence of ethnic nationalism among Sikhs.

The Sikh movement for sovereignty during the 1980s was not a sudden development. The two subsequent chapters look at the deep social and historical roots linked to the growth of contemporary Sikh self-consciousness. In [Chapter 3](#) the early evolution of the Sikhs will be looked at, starting with the inception of the Sikh religious congregation during the period of the Sikh Gurus¹ and ending with a clearly defined, fully formed ethnic community during the period of British colonial rule. Particular attention will be devoted to the induction of a distinct set of symbols, a sacred scripture, a sacred city, a community name to the Sikh separatist armoury. The focus is on the institution of the Khalsa order by the last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, and the religious reform movements in the nineteenth century that sought to renew the Sikh ethnic community in the face of Hindu attacks.

In [Chapter 4](#) the account of the three-stage evolution of the Sikhs until the present post-revolutionary situation and the growth of a specific Sikh nation aiming to create a Sikh state of Khalistan in Punjab will be examined. Here special attention will be paid to the post-independence reorganization of Punjab and how the changing territorial boundaries of Punjab have woven an expression of a homeland into the self-definition of the Sikhs. Besides possessing an already powerful set of religious symbols, a new symbol, that of language, was added to the separatist armoury. The focus is on the nature of the demand for a Punjabi *suba* or ‘a Punjabi-speaking state’ and the tactics and strategies used by the Hindu and Sikh élites. In this context, the role and the attitude of the central government, the attitude of the minority Hindu community in Punjab and the nature of Sikh politics are examined. The processes that gave rise to the Sikh armed resistance for the formation of a separate Sikh state of Khalistan and the impact of charismatic leaders like Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale will also be considered. The impact of Operation Bluestar² in the radicalization of the Sikh diaspora will also be considered. Finally, the conditions that led to the disintegration of the Sikh guerrilla movement will be examined.

This study seeks to explain the nature and timing of breakaway movements in the Indian subcontinent. In [Chapter 5](#), an attempt will be made to locate the social base of the Sikh movement for secession. My attempt to discern a pattern of mobilization takes issue with the influential study by Miroslav Hroch (1985) based on the East European situation. Hroch argues that the nationalist movement begins with an élite of intellectuals and subsequently fans out to include the professional classes and finally reaches out to other sections of society—the masses of clerks and peasants. In this context, data were collected to establish the socio-economic background of nearly 100 activists in the Sikh ethno-nationalist movement. Its central task was to bring into focus the nexus between the dislocation and alienation experienced by a section of the Sikh peasantry as a consequence of the transition to commercial agriculture, which made sections of the Sikh peasantry available for mobilization. Situations that favour a peasant-led ethno-regional struggle as a consequence of the transition to commercial agriculture will also be looked at.

Finally, this study looks at the social and cultural sphere beyond the English-speaking élite in India. The religious polemics expressed in South Asian dialects have been closed to many students of the subcontinent. Consequently, the role of the vernacular press in socio-political movements in India has been virtually overlooked. [Chapter 6](#) examines the extent to which widely available and influential media such as the vernacular press and cassettes produce inclusive and exclusive forms of nationalist identities that recharge nationalism with varying degrees of symbolic significance. The vast expansion in readers of newspapers and listeners of radio cassettes justifies the selection of this aspect as central to the process of identity formation.

I will end with a brief conclusion summarizing the argument and underlining some implications, theoretical and empirical, of this study.

1

The trouble with classic theories of nationalism

In this chapter an attempt will be made to explain the distinctive nature, growth and scope of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle in India. This concern has emerged from an attempt to develop a conceptual framework within which to seek an understanding of Sikh ethno-nationalism. Broadly speaking, an attempt will be made to identify the deeper social processes by which nations came to be envisaged in the colonial context. Emphasis will be on the specific historical conditions that gave rise to nationalism in India. This chapter comprises three sections. In the first section the key concepts used in this study of 'nations' and 'nationalism' will be defined. The beginning of the second section describes the classic modernization theories of nationalism. This is followed by a discussion on the Eurocentric limitations of the modernization theories of nationalism. In the third section, the processes that gave rise to the socio-religious reform movements during the nineteenth century under British suzerainty will be identified. The socioreligious reform movements preceded the anti-colonial nationalist struggle. Then the social base and nature of Indian nationalism will be considered.

Concepts and definitions

The field of enquiry is bedevilled by attempts to define the terms 'nations' and 'nationalism'. Despite the profound influence of nationalism in the modern world, both the terms have proved notoriously difficult to define. Despite several attempts by various scholars to define the term 'nationalism', the term remains conceptually evasive. The protean nature of nationalism is perhaps responsible for this conceptual confusion. The presence of many variants of nationalism makes it difficult to define the term by any one criterion. Although scholars are far from being agreed on the meaning of the terms 'nation' and 'nationalism', I have adopted a more inclusive representation of the term 'nationalism'. In this book, nationalism represents an ideology and movement on behalf of the nation and incorporates both political and cultural dimensions.

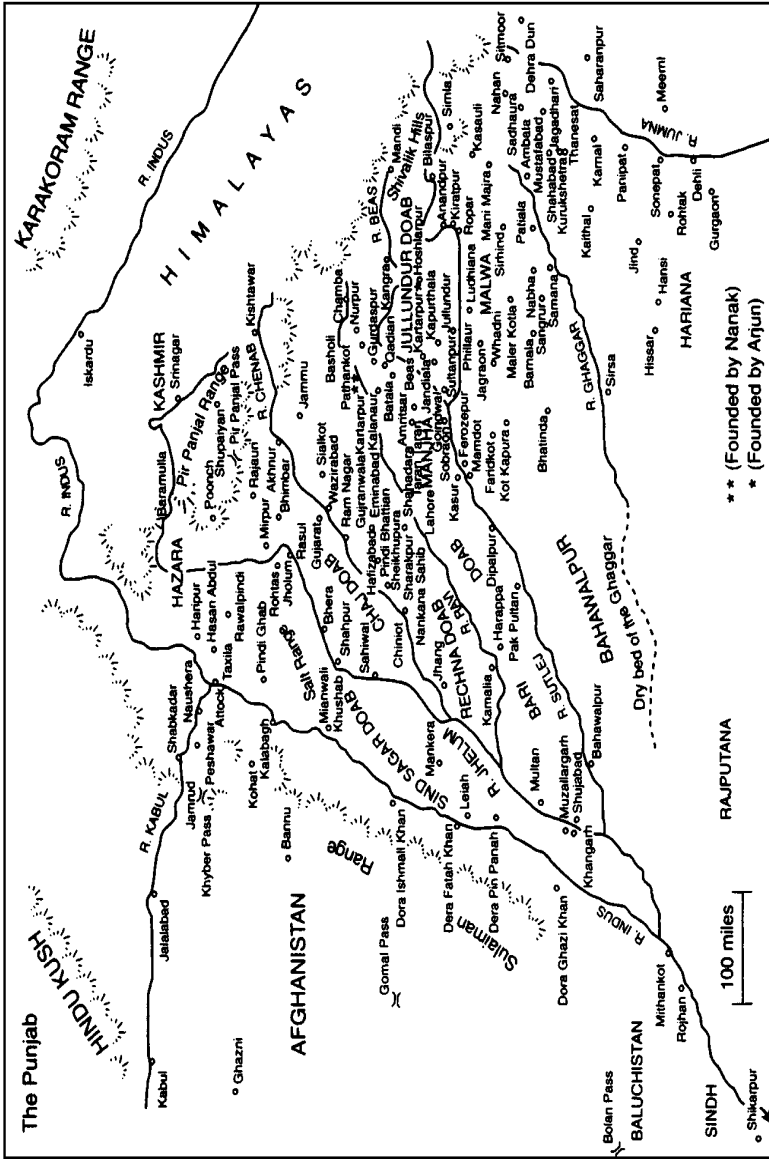
If nationalism is viewed as an ideological movement, appropriating European classic doctrinal formulations, such as the concepts of popular freedom and sovereignty, then undoubtedly nationalism arose in Europe in the eighteenth

century. Further, the rise of nationalism in the West was a predominantly mass democratic political occurrence. As the scientific state emerged as an engine for social progress, European society broke out of the conceptual mould of a religio-ethnic community so as to develop parliamentary democracy. Nevertheless, this view of nationalism is derived from a historical transformation that was unique to Europe and is not rooted in the social and political realities of non-European societies. This exclusive concern with European modernity underpins the major historical and sociological approaches to nationalism, and from this springs the conceptual muddle that mires nationalism.

What is unique about modern nationality?

For some scholars, the doctrine of nationalism is based on the twin ideals of autonomy and self-government. The desire to liberate territories subjugated by alien conquest is not new, but the impulse to transform society into a people's state and to redraw the political boundaries in conformity with ethnographic demands is unique to the modern world. The nationalist movement in India wanted to liberate the people from the constraints of British imperial rule. Nationalism is a revolutionary force that aims at transferring sovereignty from an external ruler, or a monarch, to the collectivity of people. This is made possible through the institution of the modern national state, the highest political form in which the citizens are the ultimate locus of sovereignty. The sovereign state makes possible the political and cultural integration of the masses through organized activity, such as the promotion of popular education, universal suffrage, and so on. But, whether the rationalism and the scientific temper embodied in the modern state have the potential to destroy the hold of faith on public life depends on the specific historical circumstances under which nationalism emerges. In the Indian subcontinent, religion remained the dominant social bond that defined the characteristics of the nation, despite the development of modern parliamentary democracy. It is for this reason that the Hindi term '*hindutva*' signified the equation between Hindu cultural identity and the Indian nation, whereas the Urdu term '*qaum*' designated the ideal of a religiopolitical community of Muslims and the Punjabi term '*panth*' was emblematic of a moral and political collectivity of believers in the Sikh faith.

Despite its wide intellectual currency, the term 'nation' is not easy to define. Once again, there are important differences in ways of defining the term 'nation'. Some emphasize objective elements, whereas others give significance to subjective factors. It is possible to incorporate both these approaches and avoid single-factor characterization of nations. I have adopted the following working definition of the nation: a nation is an imagined political community seeking a historic homeland for its own people, whose solidarity is sustained by the presence of cultural channels of communication, notably ethnicity and language and whose boundaries are in continual flux. In the modern world, any body of people who consider themselves to be a nation can claim the right to



Map 1.1 General map of the Punjab. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press, New Delhi

self-determination, or the right to a separate sovereign independent state for their territory. The nation is a modern construct that became salient in the Indian subcontinent in the second part of the nineteenth century. Can this definition describe the Sikh nation?

Many scholars argue that the Sikhs constituted a nation even in pre-modern times. The noted historian Joseph D. Cunningham has placed emphasis on the consolidation of power by the Sikh kingdoms and has argued that the Sikhs developed from 'a sect into a people' under Guru Gobind, and from a people to a 'nation' under Ranjit Singh (Cunningham 1966:92). The theme of the development of Sikh self-consciousness is emphasized in a classic account by the Sikh historian Khushwant Singh. He views the struggle of Sikh forces against the British in the second Anglo-Sikh War in 1848 as 'a national war of independence' (K. Singh 1962:147). However, this book proposes that, at present, the objective criteria that define membership in the Sikh nation are those of the *kes-dhari*¹ Sikhs who speak Punjabi and write it in the Gurmukhi script and those *kes-dhari* Sikhs who identify with the distinctive historical consciousness and behaviour of the Sikh people.² The Sikh nation is in the imagination because the members do not know most of their fellow members, yet in their minds they constitute a homogeneous community. The Sikh nation is envisaged as a community, because it disregards the inequality and heterogeneity that actually exists among the Sikhs. It was the development of social mobilization and political organization during the past century that played a decisive role in the development of the modern Sikh nation, as defined above. The passage of the Gurudwara Reform Act of 1925 provided the Sikhs with a solid institutional framework in the form of the SGPC and its political arm, the Akali Dal.³ Both these institutions have successfully articulated Sikh political aspirations since India gained independence. Paul Brass has argued that The Akali Dal has not been simply a political expression of pre-existing Sikh aspirations, but it has played a critical role in creating a modern Sikh nation' (Brass 1974:433).

Two other terms need preliminary definition. First, the term 'secessionism' refers to 'a demand for formal withdrawal from a central political authority by a member unit or units on the basis of a claim to independent sovereign status' (Hechter 1992:267). The persisting secessionist movements in India are the Sikh demands for sovereignty and the Muslim claims for autonomy in Kashmir. Secessionism is different from separatism, which does not aim at such withdrawal. Second, an 'ethno-regional movement' is distinguished from other regional movements by the emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness, on ethnic markers such as language or religion, in a bid to seek a separate region within an existing state, as well as seek an independent sovereign state. So, the term 'ethnic nationalism' refers to minority or majority nationalism that emphasizes ethnic distinctiveness.

The origins of nationalism in Europe

Modernization theories of nationalism

To appreciate the nature of nationalism among the Sikhs, it must be differentiated from its counterparts in Europe. To understand these European counterparts, two influential accounts of nationalism, both inside and outside Europe, that stress the role of modernization must be considered. The leading exponents of modernization theories of nationalism are Elie Kedourie, whose classic works include *Nationalism* (1960) and *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1971), and Benedict Anderson, whose work *Imagined Communities* (1991) is perhaps the most cited and original text in the field.⁴ These influential theorists explain the genesis of nationalism through the industrial transformation of European society and its spread throughout the rest of the world through colonialism. Although their approach differs over the emphasis on different processes of modernity, both their theories have stimulated lively debates on the question of the European origins of nationalism and its global osmosis.

One of the most original theories of nationalism put forth by the distinguished political philosopher Elie Kedourie is first considered. Elie Kedourie's book is an interesting starting-point because it raises several critical issues that infuse mainstream writing about the national question and will require more detailed explanation later. Kedourie's approach is that of a historian of nationalist ideas and accords a pivotal role to the disaffected intellectuals who invented the doctrine of nationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Europe. This period of European history, argues Kedourie, was characterized by profound social and political upheaval. The revolutionary philosophies of Enlightenment and classical humanism challenged the existing belief systems and social practices, which had been venerated for centuries. This revolt in European systems of life and thought was accompanied by a breakdown in the transmission of religious beliefs and political experience from one generation to the next. This created powerful social strains and eighteenth-century Europe seemed devoid of spiritual comfort. As Kedourie notes,

Put at its simplest, the need is to belong together in a coherent and stable community. Such a need is normally satisfied by the family, the neighbourhood, the religious community. In the last century and a half such institutions all over the world have had to bear the brunt of violent social and intellectual change, and it is no accident that nationalism was at its most intense where and when such institutions had little resilience and were ill-prepared to withstand the powerful attacks to which they became exposed.

(Kedourie 1960:101)

The nationalist principle was an attempt by European intellectuals to restore the sinews of 'lost community' in the modern world. Thus, nationalism was a conspicuous outgrowth of the personal discontent of European intellectuals who sought millennial solutions to this violent change.

But why did European domination evoke nationalism in Asia and Africa? Kedourie's classic work *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1971) is centred around this pertinent question. In cognizance with his general theory, Kedourie explains the diffusion of the doctrine of nationalism through the Western-educated élite in Asia and Africa. In other words, the osmosis of European manners and ideas through the indigenous professional classes was decisive in the proliferation of nationalism in Asia and Africa. The indigenous élite imbibed current European political thought and were deeply stirred by the dominant strands in the modes of modern European thought. Moreover, the prestige of European prosperity, its military might and the success of its administrative methods generated a desire to emulate and adapt the European belief system. By contrast, 'the traditional societies showed up so lamentably in comparison' (Kedourie 1970:27). This generated discontent with the existing traditional societies and an impulse to adopt European doctrines. Moreover, the planetary spread of European power from the sixteenth century onwards was accompanied by the growth of conceptions of biological contamination. The racial discrimination that these marginal men were subjected to, coupled with the oppressive sense of inferiority, erupted in the twentieth century anti-colonial movements that sought to oust imperial rulers and establish new states in the ex-colonial territories. Kedourie emphasizes that nationalism was an ideal wholly conceived and elaborated in Europe and a completely alien concept in Asia and Africa. He notes,

Almost any Asian or African nationalism, considered as a scheme of thought or a programme of action, suffers from artificiality, from seeming a laborious attempt to introduce outlandish standards and out-of-place categories, and nowhere do they seem more out-of-place than in trying to adopt the European category of the nation-state.

(Kedourie 1970:30)

In a 'traditional' hierarchical society, an individual occupies a well-defined space in a meaningful and coherent cosmic order. This fulfils the basic need of an individual and is a source of immense security. But the process of 'Europeanization of government and economy', the transformation from a self-sufficient subsistence economy into the increasing involvement with the world economy, pulverized the social fabric of these societies (Kedourie 1970: 27). The psychological strain experienced by the masses as the processes of modernity impinged upon them was successfully articulated by the indigenous élite through the 'European' doctrine of nationalism. Thus, the disaffected Western-educated élite constituted the vanguard of anti-colonial nationalism in Asia and Africa.

Finally, Kedourie has emphasized key aspects that endow the nationalist principle with a European outlook. The key feature of the nationalist doctrine is the historicist conception of the nation. According to Kedourie, the doctrine of nationalism rests on the European intellectual tradition of secular millenarianism. To define a nation, it is necessary to evoke the nation's past. This attempt to resurrect a past is linked to the tendency to enforce uniformity of belief, particularly religious homogeneity, among members of a body politic. The nationalist doctrine is based on those premises that were unique to European politics in medieval and modern times. Thus, according to Kedourie, nationalism as a doctrine holds that the only legitimate political association is one that binds together people speaking the same language, sharing the same culture and cherishing the same heroes and ancestors. Therefore, nationalism expresses a preoccupation with history that has come to be a dominant theme of the modern European outlook and which has also been taken up wherever European culture has penetrated (Kedourie 1970:35).

Benedict Anderson's widely acclaimed book *Imagined Communities* (1991) is a powerful attempt to formulate a theory of nationalism from a Marxian historian's perspective. Anderson regards nationalism as a 'cultural artifact' and examines the discrete historical forces that gave birth to an originary nationalism in America towards the end of the eighteenth century. He then goes on to explain the global spread and adoption of the idea of the nation, first by popular movements in Europe and later by the anti-imperialist movements in Asia and Africa.

The depth of Anderson's work lies in his presentation of the conditions and processes that gave rise to nationalism in Western Europe. The nation, he argues, is a modern construct. It became possible to 'think' the nation only after the erosion of three fundamental cultural conceptions, first in Western minds and later elsewhere. These systems of life and thought were, first, the concept of a cosmically central classical community, linked by a distinct sacred script. Second was the idea of sacral monarchy, which gave legitimacy to the dynastic states that formed the world political system. Third was the belief that cosmology and history were identical; the origins of the world were indistinguishable from the origins of humankind. These worldviews imparted meaning to the uncertainties and the fatalities of human existence. However, the development of a capitalist economy, social and scientific discoveries and the rapid expansion of communication brought about a profound transformation in modes of apprehending the world. The gradual demotion of these interlinked certainties was in Anderson's words,

No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it fruitful, than print capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think