

## PANDIT SHRI RAM SHARMA AND ISSUES OF SOUTH EAST PUNJAB

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### ABSTRACT

The princes and the people of Haryana played a very significant role in the uprising of 1857. When the uprising petered out, the region was detached from the North-West Province and as a political punishment it was tagged with the Punjab. Before and after the cession of a part of Punjab into Pakistan, the Punjab Government had always neglected the Haryana region. The development disparity between Haryana region and rest of the state had caused concern and the demand of the separate state gained momentum with the passage of time. The people of Haryana never welcomed the merger with Punjab because of their own culture and language. So the people once again rose up with the demand of a separate state. Pandit Shri Ram Sharma was of the opinion that the demand for the formation of Haryana came to the fore with the rise of political consciousness in the 1920s.

**Key Words: Haryana, Punjab, Partition, Culture, Language.**

### INTRODUCTION

The present state of Haryana (South-East Punjab) came into existence on November 1, 1966 after the recommendations of the Punjab Boundary Commission vide its report submitted on May 31, 1966. (The Tribune, 1st Nov., 1966) A Bill known as the Punjab Reorganization Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Shri Gulzari Lal Nanda the Minister of Home Affairs on September 3, 1966 (Lok Sabha Debates: 1966, 9481) indicating trifurcation of Punjab into the states of Punjab and Haryana and the creation of Chandigarh as a Union Territory and with a common capital at Chandigarh. The bill was passed by the Parliament on September 7, 1966 and received President's assent on September 18, 1966. The state having 20 districts, 10 seats in Lok Sabha and 90 seats in Vidhan Sabha at present was formed consisting of just 1 divisions, 7 districts, 9 seats in Lok Sabha and 54 seats in Vidhan Sabha, 27 Tehsils and 62 Towns. The population was 7,599,759 (Urban 1,307,608 and Rural 6,292,079) and area was 43,903 square kilometers. (Madan, 60)

In 1833, this region became the part of the newly organized state of the North-West Province and remained its part up to 1858. (Shekon, 41) The princes and the people of Haryana played a very significant role in the uprising of 1857. (Yadav, 88) When the uprising petered out, the region was detached from the North-West Province and as a political punishment it was tagged with the Punjab. (Yadav, 88) From 1857 to 1966, Haryana had been a part of the Punjab. Before and after the cession of a part of Punjab into Pakistan, the Punjab Government had always neglected the Haryana region. (Hindustan Times, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1966) Sant Fateh Singh, President of Shiromani Akali Dal, also said that the people of the Haryana region were punished by the then British rulers for participating in the 1857 Mutiny and the part of the Haryana region had been merged with Punjab. The Union Government had so far failed to 'undo this wrong'. (The Times of India, 4 Aug 1965)

The development disparity between Haryana region and rest of the state had caused concern and the demand of the separate state gained momentum with the passage of time. <sup>(Gupta, 6)</sup> The people of Haryana never welcomed the merger with Punjab because of their own culture and language. So the people once again rose up with the demand of a separate state. However, the demand was mainly based on the biased treatment of the government as a result of which this part remained economically backward. The other reason was the imposition of Punjabi as a compulsory language for all the students in Haryana. Pandit Shri Ram Sharma was of the opinion that the demand for the formation of Haryana came to the fore with the rise of political consciousness in the 1920s. (The Tribune, 20 Nov.1953& Hindustan Times, 17 April, 1954)

When Mahatma Gandhi was going to London to attend the Second Session of the Indian Round Table Conference, a deputation of Haryana leaders met him at Badli, a small railway station near Delhi and suggested to him the formation of Haryana as a separate province. At the Round Table Conference, the unity of Haryana with Punjab was criticized and the government was requested to put an end to this artificial unity for betterment of both, the people of Ambala division and Punjabis. (Dev, 102-5)

In a convention of Gurgaon citizens, a resolution was passed that after 1857 uprising the parts of Haryana region and Hindi-speaking areas of PEPSU were tagged with Punjab due to participating this region in the revolt of 1857. That as a result of this unnatural attachment to Punjab, this region suffered terribly for more than a century in respect of education, services, irrigation, roads, industries and other amenities of life. We have been totally ignored not only after tagged with Punjab but also in the post-partition period after withdrawal of the British. (The Tribune, 3 Feb 1960) Pandit Shri Ram Sharma, the leader of the opposition in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, delivered a message in the Greater Haryana Conference in Beri village (Rohtak District) that the people of Haryana would not get a fair deal so long as Haryana Prant formed part of the Punjab State. (The Tribune, 3 Dec. 1956) In the second general elections Congress Party stated that out of total 154 seats for the Punjab Assembly, 89 would be allocated to the Punjabi zone and 65 to the Hindi zone. So, it further proves that there were also discriminations in allotment of tickets in the Hindi speaking region. (The Hindu, 10 Jan 1956)

The movement of states reorganization on linguistic bases gained more and more momentum and the government found it increasingly difficult to cope with the situation as it had also spread to the other cities in Punjab. The leaders of Haryana, like Pandit Shri Ram Sharma and Shri Chand, got the resolution passed in the Regional Committee of the north western zone of All India Linguistic States Conference, "That the committee is of the considered view that the propagation of the demand of reorganization of states on linguistic and cultural basis is the constitutional right of every citizen and organization. The ban imposed by the Punjab government on innocent slogans connected with the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state is absolutely unjustified and unconstitutional". (Singh, 168)

The Congress Workers Meeting at Kurukshetra viewed that the Haryana Prant consisting of Karnal, Rohtak, Hisar and Gurgaon districts constitutes one-third of the population of Punjab State, but out of the 11 elective posts, this region was given only two and now the number has been reduced to one due to the exit of Pandit Shri Ram Sharma, former Civil Supplies Minister. (The Statesman, 2 Dec. 1963) Mr. Hardwari Lal, MLA, at a largely public attended meeting at Rohtak on 1 December 1963,

spoke about the step-motherly treatment that was being meted out to the people of Haryana by the Punjab Government. The people of Haryana were being kept backward by not given their due share in the services and development schemes of the State Government. (The Statesman, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1966)

On 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1964, Ram Kishan, the then Punjab Chief Minister announced the government's decision to appoint a committee to recommend effective measures for the development of the Haryana region. The committee known as the Haryana Development Committee was set up by the government on 20 March, 1965 with Shri Ram Sharma as its Chairman. (The Times of India, 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1966) The Haryana Development Committee held its first meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1965 and decided to issue a questionnaire to all representative bodies and organizations as well as a large number of individuals belonging to the Haryana region. Almost all the heads of government departments were separately addressed to secure information on various points concerning the Haryana region. The Committee discussed the matter with all the Administrative Secretaries and the heads of departments in the first and second week of June 1965. After submitting the interim report to the Government on 4 August, 1965, the committee visited all the district headquarters and some of the tehsil headquarters, and secured the views of prominent non-officials as well as officials serving in these areas. (HDC, 1)

While submitting the recommendations to the Government, Pandit Shri Ram Sharma, the Chairman of the Haryana Development Committee said that 'the Committee noted with great concern that the Haryana region was lagging behind in almost all the fields'. (HDC, 2) He claimed that the representation of the people of Haryana regions in the government jobs sector was 'woefully inadequate'. (Madan, 66) He suggested that a special administrative committee should be set up to supervise the development efforts in Haryana region. (HDC, 189) The Committee reported, their number in the services was very small before the partition of the country (The Tribune, 1966) and remained same even after the Independence. Pandit Shri Ram Sharma, in a memorandum, submitted to the Union Home Minister, Mr. G.L. Nanda, has said that all the water and electricity sources were situated in the Punjabi Region. He has therefore impressed on him that a joint board for irrigation and power is necessary. He said that the people of Haryana have been ignored in the matter of services, so a special Public Service Commission should be set up for the Haryana state. (The Statesman, 17 Jan 1966)

The Haryana Development Committee came to the conclusion that the area is "glaringly backward" in spite of three Five Year Plans. The Committee recommended a weight-age of at least 50 percent for Haryana in the district and regional schemes in the Fourth Five Year Plan, so as to bring them equal of the Punjab region. (Haryana Tilak, 8 Feb 1966 & The Tribune, 1966) Shri Ram Sharma said that he would give about six months to the Government to accept and implement the recommendation of the Committee. "To judge the good faith of the Government for the development of Haryana, we shall see what it does in the first year of the Fourth Plan," he said and added that after this period, he would use the press and the platform to create public opinion for the implementation of the measures recommended by this committee. (Lok Sabha Debates: 1966, 9481)

A bill to divide Punjab, known as the Punjab Reorganization Bill, was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Home Minister, G. L. Nanda, on 3 September, 1966. (Haryana Tilak, 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1966) The bill for the reorganization of Punjab in two states of Punjab and Haryana and the creation of