

CHAUDHARY DEVI LAL AND THE FORMATION OF HARYANA STATE: A STUDY OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND STATE REORGANIZATION (1947-1966)

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the pivotal role played by Chaudhary Devi Lal in the struggle for the formation of a separate Haryana state from the composite Punjab province between 1947-1966. The study analyses the political, linguistic, cultural, and economic factors that led to the demand for a separate Haryana state, culminating in its establishment on November 1, 1966, as the 17th state of India. Through detailed analysis of parliamentary debates, commission reports, and contemporary newspaper accounts, this paper demonstrates how Chaudhary Devi Lal's leadership transformed regional grievances into a successful state formation movement, highlighting the significance of linguistic and cultural identity in India's federal reorganization.

Keywords: haryana formation, chaudhary devi lal, punjab reorganization, linguistic states, state formation, indian federalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The formation of Haryana state on November 1, 1966, represents one of the most significant examples of successful regional political mobilization in post-independence India. At the heart of this movement was Chaudhary Devi Lal, whose sustained political struggle spanning nearly two decades ultimately resulted in the creation of India's 17th state. The Haryana state emerged from the Hindi-speaking regions of the composite Punjab province, encompassing 1 division, 7 districts, 27 tehsils, 62 towns, and securing 9 Lok Sabha seats, 5 Rajya Sabha seats, and 54 Legislative Assembly seats at the time of its formation (The Tribune 01 Nov 1966).

This paper examines the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, economic, and political factors that shaped the demand for a separate Haryana state, with particular focus on the leadership role of Chaudhary Devi Lal. The study covers the period from India's independence in 1947 to the actual formation of Haryana in 1966, tracing the evolution of regional consciousness and political mobilization that culminated in successful state formation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical Background and Context

The historical roots of the Haryana region's distinct identity can be traced to the 1857 rebellion, where the Haryana region's people made significant contributions to the uprising (Yadav 80). However, following the suppression of the rebellion, the British administration separated this region from the North-West Province and merged it with Punjab province and Sikh-ruled territories including Patiala, Jind, Nabha, and Faridkot as a form of political punishment (Chautala 139). Despite this administrative merger, significant linguistic and cultural differences persisted between Punjab and the Haryana region. The distinct linguistic identity of the Haryana region remained a persistent source of tension within the composite Punjab province. The region remained part of Punjab province until

1966, despite these fundamental differences in language, culture, and social practices.

2.2 Early Demands for Separate Statehood

The idea of a separate Haryana state predates Chaudhary Devi Lal's leadership. The first proposal for a separate Haryana state and Delhi as capital was raised by Swami Satyanand in Lahore in 1923. Subsequently, the issue was taken up at various forums including the All India Jat Students' Conference in Meerut under the chairmanship of Sir Chhotu Ram, and at the All India Muslim League Conference in Delhi in 1926, where a resolution was passed to separate the Hindi-speaking areas and Ambala division from Punjab and merge them with Delhi (Chautala 140).

The 1928 All Parties Conference in Delhi supported the creation of new states based on linguistic and cultural foundations. In 1931, leaders from the Haryana region including Lala Desh Bandhu Gupta, Pandit Neki Ram Sharma, and Pandit Shri Ram Sharma met Mahatma Gandhi at Badli Railway Station to discuss the establishment of a separate Haryana state. During the Second Round Table Conference, British official Geoffrey Corbett also raised the issue of transferring the Hindi-speaking Ambala region from Punjab to a new Haryana province (Dev 102-105).

2.3 Post-Independence Political Developments

Following independence, despite the Congress party's earlier support for linguistic reorganization, the party abandoned this position (The Hindustan Times 09 Nov 1932). However, regional disparities and discrimination against the Haryana region became increasingly apparent in the post-independence period. These disparities manifested in various spheres including administrative representation, economic development, and political participation.

The 1952 general elections, though resulting in the victory of 38 Congress legislators from the Haryana region including Chaudhary Devi Lal, saw only Chaudhary Lahri Singh and Pandit Shri Ram Sharma being inducted into the cabinet. This limited representation in the state government became a significant source of grievance, as documented in contemporary newspaper reports (Chautala 142-43).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a historical-analytical approach, drawing primarily from contemporary documents, newspaper reports, parliamentary debates, commission reports. The research methodology includes:

1. **Primary Sources:** Parliamentary proceedings, commission reports, contemporary newspaper accounts from The Tribune (Ambala), Haryana Tilak (Rohtak), Purvi Punjab (Bhiwani), and other regional publications.
2. **Secondary Sources:** Historical analyses and academic studies on state formation and Indian federalism.
3. **Archival Research:** Analysis of government documents, memoranda, and official correspondence related to the Haryana formation movement.

The study adopts a chronological framework while maintaining thematic coherence to trace the evolution of the movement from 1947 to 1966.

4. CHAUDHARY DEVI LAL'S POLITICAL JOURNEY AND LEADERSHIP

4.1 Early Political Career and Regional Advocacy

Chaudhary Devi Lal's political career began in the immediate post-independence period,

marked by his consistent advocacy for the rights and interests of the Haryana region. During his second term in the Punjab assembly (1962–67), he worked to separate the predominantly Hindi-speaking Haryana portion from Punjab, which was achieved in 1966. His political philosophy was rooted in the belief that Haryana's separation from Punjab should be on linguistic and cultural grounds. Following the 1952 elections, Chaudhary Devi Lal, along with Chaudhary Charan Singh, submitted a memorandum signed by 100 legislators from Uttar Pradesh and 25 from the Haryana region to Home Minister G.B. Pant, demanding the formation of a new Maha-Delhi state. This early initiative demonstrated his commitment to regional reorganization based on linguistic principles (Chautala 142-43).

4.2 Confronting Administrative Discrimination

Chaudhary Devi Lal consistently highlighted the systematic discrimination faced by the Haryana region in administrative appointments and development allocations. In April 1954, when Bhim Sen Sachar and Pratap Singh Kairon rejected his proposal to make him Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and instead appointed S. Gurdiyal Singh from the Punjabi region, Chaudhary Devi Lal strongly protested this decision. His opposition intensified when Pratap Singh Kairon became Punjab's Chief Minister in 1955 and appointed him as Parliamentary Secretary, while continuing to neglect Haryana's interests. The merger of PEPSU state with Punjab on November 1, 1956, further complicated the political dynamics, as Chief Minister Kairon, with an increased number of assembly members, appointed Vrish Bhan as Deputy Chief Minister instead of Professor Sher Singh, effectively sidelining Haryana's representation (Chautala 144-45).

4.3 Advocacy before Commissions

In 1953, Chaudhary Devi Lal presented the demand for a separate Haryana state before the States Reorganization Commission established by the Government of India (Gupta 98). His approach differed significantly from that of Akali leader Master Tara Singh, who demanded Punjab's division on religious grounds in 1955 (Madan, Rajesh Kumar). Chaudhary Devi Lal emphasized language rather than religion as the basis for state reorganization, demonstrating his secular and inclusive vision.

During the Punjab Legislative Assembly debate on the States Reorganization Commission report, Chaudhary Devi Lal spoke in Haryanvi language, which neither the Speaker nor the interpreters could understand. This symbolic act reinforced his argument that the language, culture, and lifestyle of the Haryana region were entirely different from those of Punjab's core areas (Proceedings, Punjab Legislative Assembly).

5. ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE GRIEVANCES

5.1 Development Disparities

On October 18, 1960, Chaudhary Devi Lal addressed the Punjab Legislative Assembly, presenting detailed evidence of discrimination against the Haryana region in the Third Five-Year Plan. He pointed out that out of the allocated amounts of Rs. 153.67 lakh, Rs. 63.50 lakh, and Rs. 471.54 lakh for agriculture, minor irrigation projects, and health respectively, the Haryana region received only Rs. 37.99 lakh, Rs. 36.5 lakh, and Rs. 108 lakh. Meanwhile, the milk supply scheme allocated Rs. 65.64 lakh exclusively for the Punjabi region (Proceedings, Punjab Legislative Assembly).

5.2 Employment and Administrative Representation

In his March 14, 1961 Legislative Assembly speech, Chaudhary Devi Lal highlighted the stark disparities in employment opportunities. He revealed that employment in the Punjabi region was 80% higher compared to the Hindi-speaking region. Among 9 positions of Secretary and

Commissioner level, none were from the Hindi-speaking region. Similarly, out of 10 Indian Administrative Service officers, only one was from the Hindi-speaking region, while among Punjab Civil Service officers, only 75 out of 300 were from this region (Proceedings, Punjab Legislative Assembly).

The statistics he presented painted a clear picture of systematic exclusion: among Deputy Superintendent of Police and District Level School Inspectors, only 4 out of 18 and 2 out of 18 respectively were from the Hindi-speaking region. At the state government level, out of 109 positions of Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Assistant Secretary, only 4 were from the Hindi-speaking region, and despite constituting 59% of Punjab's population, the Hindi-speaking region had only one minister in the Cabinet (Purvi Punjab 05 Feb 1962).

6. POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP

6.1 Formation of Progressive Independent Party

In March 1962, Chaudhary Devi Lal emerged as the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly with 22 legislators, leading to the formation of the "Progressive Independent Party" (The Tribune 16 Nov. 1964). This political formation included all opposition parties united on a common platform to protect democracy. Bachan Singh was appointed as Deputy Leader and Chiranjilal as Secretary of the party (Haryana Tilak 19 June 1964).

The Progressive Independent Party served as a platform for raising both provincial common issues and specific problems related to the Haryana region. The party consistently challenged the Kairon administration on issues of corruption, development disparities, and administrative discrimination (Purvi Punjab 05 Feb 1962).

6.2 Anti-Corruption Campaigns

Chaudhary Devi Lal played a crucial role in exposing corruption in the Kairon administration. In March 1962, he announced that all opposition parties had formed "joint fronts" to end corrupt governance in the state. The opposition launched a campaign against Kairon and pressured the Congress high command to establish an inquiry committee against him (The Tribune 16 Nov 1964).

The Supreme Court's decision against Kairon provided an opportunity for opposition parties to pressure Pandit Nehru in Parliament, resulting in the establishment of a one-member commission under former Chief Justice S.R. Das, known as the Das Commission, under the 1952 Inquiry Act (The Tribune 16 Nov 1964). On July 13, 1963, Chaudhary Devi Lal and 26 other leaders submitted a memorandum against Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon to President S. Radhakrishnan (Yadav 93).

7. THE PATH TO STATEHOOD: COMMISSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

7.1 Parliamentary Committee and Boundary Commission

The intensification of the Punjabi Suba movement and Sant Fateh Singh's hunger strike created new political dynamics (Singh, Shukla 178). The Indian Government set up a Commission under the Chairmanship of Justice J.C. Shah on 23 April 1966 to divide the existing state of Punjab and determine the boundaries of the new State of Haryana. This commission, known as the Punjab Boundary Commission, was tasked with demarcating the boundaries of the new states (Rai 138). Before the commission, various leaders from Haryana presented their case for statehood. Chaudhary Devi Lal, as Chairman of the All Parties Haryana Action Committee, Professor Sher Singh as Chairman of the Haryana Lok Samiti, Minister Chaudhary Chandram from the Punjab cabinet,

Chaudhary Surjmal, and Chaudhary Ranvir Singh Hooda all separately advocated for Haryana statehood and argued for including Chandigarh in Haryana (Rai 141).

7.2 Boundary Demarcation and Disputes

The Boundary Commission recommended that "District Hisar, Mahendragarh, Gurgaon, Rohtak, and Karnal, and tehsils Narwana and Jind (Sangrur district), Kharar tehsil (including Chandigarh capital area), Naraingarh, Ambala, and Jagadhri (Ambala district)" should be merged to form the Hindi-speaking (Haryana) state (Punjab Boundary Commission 48-49). One member of the commission, S. Dutt, in his special note, wrote that the entire Kharar tehsil, including Kalka town or Kalka police station, should be included in the Hindi-speaking state along with the Chandigarh capital area (Punjab Boundary Commission 46). However, this recommendation regarding Chandigarh became a source of controversy, with Punjabi Suba supporters wanting to retain Chandigarh, while Haryana supporters wanted it included in Haryana based on the commission's recommendations.

8. THE FINAL RESOLUTION: PUNJAB REORGANIZATION ACT, 1966

8.1 Political Compromise and Shared Capital

Despite the boundary commission's recommendations, political considerations necessitated a compromise solution. The territorial changes resulted in the formation of the newly created State of Haryana on 1 November 1966, carved out after the linguistic reorganisation of Punjab. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced on June 12, 1966, that to strengthen mutual relations between Haryana and Punjab, Chandigarh would be the joint capital of both states and would be given the status of a Union Territory (The Statesman 13 June 1966).

This decision faced tremendous opposition. Punjab Congress President Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma stated that the government had succumbed to pressure from the Akali movement and failed to fully implement the Punjab Boundary Commission's recommendations.

8.2 The Punjab Reorganization Bill

On September 3, 1966, the "Punjab Reorganization Bill" was introduced in the Lok Sabha despite opposition. The bill included the following key provisions: (Lok Sabha Debates, 9481).

1. The High Court would be common to both Punjab and Haryana, and Chandigarh would be the joint capital and Union Territory of both states.
2. Punjab University, Punjab Agricultural University, and the Electricity Board would be shared between Punjab and Haryana.
3. A Bhakra Management Board would be established, funded appropriately by the governments of Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan.
4. The number of Legislative Assembly members for Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh would be 62, 87, and 56 respectively, later to be increased to 81 and 104 for Haryana and Punjab after general elections.

The state of Haryana was formed on November 1, 1966 as the seventeenth (17th) state. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma became the first Chief Minister of Haryana (Rai 150). At the time of formation, Haryana had a population of 75,99,759 and an area of 43,887 square kilometres (The Tribune 01 Nov. 1966).

9. CHAUDHARY DEVI LAL'S ROLE IN THE 1967 ELECTIONS

9.1 Independent Political Strategy

For the February 1967 Haryana Legislative Assembly elections for 81 seats, Chaudhary Devi Lal adopted a unique political strategy. He neither applied for a Congress ticket nor asked his supporters who had remained in the Congress to leave the party. Instead, he announced a policy of "go it alone," declaring that he would not join any political party.

Some of his supporters, excluding those who remained in the Congress, contested the 1967 Haryana Legislative Assembly elections as independent candidates. In their campaign, they focused on regional issues and local problems while appealing to the state's people that the state's governance should be in the hands of those who had struggled for its creation.

9.2 Legacy of the Struggle

From August 15, 1947, with India's independence, Chaudhary Devi Lal consistently raised his voice for the interests of the Haryana region, from rural assemblies to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. He sacrificed political power and comfort to become a strong opposition leader for the establishment of a separate Haryana state. Chaudhary Devi Lal presented Haryana's case before various commissions including the Das Commission, Parliamentary Committee, and Punjab Boundary Commission, arguing that the Punjab government had economically and politically exploited the Haryana region and treated Haryana as Punjab's fiefdom.

10. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

10.1 Factors Contributing to Success

The success of the Haryana formation movement can be attributed to several key factors:

Leadership and Vision: Chaudhary Devi Lal's consistent leadership over nearly two decades provided the movement with direction and continuity. His secular approach, emphasizing linguistic rather than religious differences, broadened the movement's appeal.

Economic Grievances: The systematic documentation of economic discrimination and development disparities provided concrete evidence for the demand for statehood. The statistical evidence presented by Chaudhary Devi Lal in legislative debates created a compelling case for separate administration.

Political Strategy: The formation of cross-party coalitions and the Progressive Independent Party demonstrated political maturity and the ability to transcend narrow partisan interests for the larger cause of regional identity.

Timing and Context: The movement coincided with the broader national discourse on linguistic reorganization and the Punjabi Suba movement, creating favorable political conditions for state reorganization.

10.2 Comparative Analysis

The Haryana formation movement differed significantly from other linguistic state movements in several ways:

1. **Secular Framework:** Unlike some other regional movements, the Haryana movement explicitly rejected religious criteria and emphasized linguistic and cultural factors.
2. **Evidence-Based Approach:** The movement relied heavily on statistical evidence and systematic documentation of grievances rather than emotional appeals alone.

3. **Institutional Engagement:** The leadership consistently worked through institutional channels, presenting cases before various commissions and maintaining dialogue with the central government.
4. **Cross-Party Support:** The movement successfully mobilized support across party lines, creating broad-based political consensus for statehood.

10.3 Impact on Indian Federalism

The formation of Haryana contributed to the evolution of Indian federalism in several ways:

1. **Precedent for Linguistic States:** The successful creation of Haryana based on linguistic criteria reinforced the principle of linguistic reorganization in Indian federalism.
2. **Federal Accommodation:** The compromise solution of shared capital and institutions demonstrated the flexibility of Indian federalism in accommodating regional aspirations while maintaining unity.
3. **Democratic Process:** The movement's success through democratic means and institutional processes strengthened faith in India's democratic institutions.

11. CONCLUSION

The formation of Haryana state represents a remarkable example of successful regional mobilization within India's democratic framework. Chaudhary Devi Lal's leadership was instrumental in transforming regional grievances into a coherent political movement that ultimately achieved its objective of statehood. His approach, characterized by secular principles, evidence-based arguments, and institutional engagement, provided a model for democratic state formation movements.

The study reveals several important insights:

1. **Importance of Persistent Leadership:** Chaudhary Devi Lal's sustained effort over two decades demonstrates the crucial role of consistent leadership in regional movements.
2. **Power of Documentation:** The systematic documentation of economic and administrative discrimination provided the factual foundation necessary for successful political mobilization.
3. **Institutional Pathways:** The movement's success through institutional channels reinforces the importance of working within democratic frameworks for achieving political objectives.
4. **Compromise and Accommodation:** The eventual resolution, while not meeting all demands (particularly regarding Chandigarh), demonstrates the importance of political compromise in federal systems.

The formation of Haryana also highlights the complex interplay between regional identity, economic development, and political representation in India's federal system. Chaudhary Devi Lal's vision of a separate Haryana state was ultimately realized, contributing to India's linguistic reorganization and strengthening its federal structure.

The legacy of this movement continues to influence contemporary debates about federalism, regional autonomy, and state formation in India. The principles and methods employed by Chaudhary Devi Lal remain relevant for understanding how regional aspirations can be accommodated within India's democratic and federal framework.

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