

Immediately, after the fourth Assembly Election was held in February 1967. The Congress emerged as the largest party with 48 seats (46.16% of the total) and 3746% of the total valid votes cast. The Sant Akali Dal won 24 seats with 20.46% of the total votes polled. The Jana Sangh secured 9, the CPI 5, the CPI(M) 3, the Republican party 3, Master Akali Dal 2 and the Socialists 1 seat. The total number of seats in the Punjab Legislative Assembly was 104 (Ibid., p. 275). It was first time since 1952 that Congress failed to secure its dominance in the state.

Master Akali Dal, Jana Sangh and six Independents-formed the People's United Front on 4th March 1967 and claimed a majority in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. On 8th March 1967, UF ministry was formed. It included all the political parties represented in the legislature other than the Congress party. The new ministry was headed by Gurnam Singh (Sant Akali) who was now the right hand man of Sant Fateh Singh. The United Front was the cocktail of ideologies but having one thing in common, a resolve that the Congress must not be permitted to form the ministry in Punjab (Ibid., p. 276). Thus the coalition was formed only to keep Congress party out and without power.

Like other states where opposition governments were formed, in Punjab also UF made an endeavour to keep congress out of power. But the alliance failed in its objective because the opposition parties were not able to reach consensus. Ultimately the UF ministry resigned on 22nd November 1967, when a large-scale defection of 17 MLAs of the UF headed by Lachhman Singh Gill, a foremost member of the Sant Akali Dal reduced the effective majority of the ministry in the legislature. But, even in its relatively brief tenure of less than nine months, the ministry was defeated once and it faced a serious no-confidence motion. It had been expanded five times and reshuffled twice. The ministry had to face many odds: defections from its own ranks, personal ambitions of legislators, differences among its constituent political parties over matters of policy, and worst of all a power struggle inside the Sant Akali Dal began which was the dominant party in the coalition (Ibid., p. 276). The collapse of UF ministry on 22nd November 1967 came mainly because of factionalism in the dominant Akali Dal (Sant) than owing to difference between the junior partners.

Lachhman Singh Gill formed another ministry in Punjab on 25th November 1967, when Gurnam Singh gracefully submitted his resignation to the Governor, D.C. Pavata. Lachhman Singh Gill and 16 other members of UF (eight of whom were Akalis) formed a new political group, called the Punjab Santa Party. Its strength never exceeded more than 21 members, and almost all of them held ministerial posts. It was in a hopeless minority in the legislature. But it was helped to maintain itself by the Congress party, which itself did not join the ministry. Infact, the Congress had been a party to the defection drama staged on 22nd November 1967 (Ibid., pp. 278-279).

The controversies that centered round the constitutional problems were Governor Pavate was criticized for not allowing enough time to Gurnam Singh, the leader of the outgoing UF parties which still formed the largest group in the legislature to indicate whether he could form the government (Ibid., pp. 279-281).

On 20th August 1968, the Congress President, S. Najalingappa, formally announced the withdrawal of the Congress support to the Gill ministry in Punjab, as a consequence of that government fell, and President's Rule was proclaimed in the state on 23rd August 1968, which lasted till 17th February 1969. Its healing touch restored the state to normalcy. The administration was toned up some of the unpopular measures of the Gill ministry were reversed. The law and order situation registered considerable improvement. The Gill ministry had only one achievement to its credit that was peedily implemented the Official Language Act, 1967. Consequently, Punjabi was introduced at the language of administration at the district level on 1st January 1968, at all levels on 1st April 1969 (Ibid., p. 281). Thus it can be stated that the period from March 1967 to February 1969 is a period of constitutional crisis. The state was facing different situations. The Shiromani Akali Dal that had improved its electoral support in 1967's elections, facing factional politics due to internal fights among the members of the Dal. Congress was also trying to divide the Dal to maintain its dominance in the state. It was the period of political instability. The role of the Congress party in the state was not of mature opposition. It was the party that was responsible for instability in the state. The period is known for the emergence of coalition politics at the state level.

In 1969 mid-term elections, the Akali Dal and Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS) formed a coalition under the same Chief Minister (Gurnam Singh) who had headed the United Front coalition of 1967. Balramji Dass Tandon of the BJS was deputy CM and Sant Fateh Singh was President of the Akali Dal. In mid-term poll the Congress won 38 seats and Akalis' 43, but immediately Congress began losing its number as members defected to the winning party (Wallace & Roy 2007, p. 126). Although the Akali Dal emerged as the single largest party in 1969 elections, yet it decided to form a coalition with the support of eight Jana Sangh legislators in order to pursue the political agenda of Hindu-Sikh unity (Wallace & Roy 2003, pp. 376-377).

The coalition ministry began well as a team, but soon the two partners developed differences between themselves over the language policy, which was declared on 2nd July 1969. The Sachar formula and the PEPSU formula, that had hitherto been regulating the educational policy of the government, were scrapped and replaced by a 'Three Language Formula', according to that Punjabi would be the first compulsory language and the medium of instruction at all stages in Government Schools, Hindi would be the second language from the fourth class and English the third compulsory language from the sixth class. On this proposal both the parties were agreed. But for the government aided schools there was a clash between the two partners. The Akali Dal ministers favoured a uniform formula for both the government schools and the government aided private schools. The Jana Sangh ministers threatened to quit the ministry unless the government aided private schools were given an option to adopt any language as the medium of instruction according to the choice of the parents of the pupil. The Akali Dal succumbed to the Jana Sangh demand in order to save the coalition, but this further strained the relations between the two parties. The Congress Party's resolution, adopted at a joint meeting of the Punjab Pradesh Congress and the State Congress Party, took up a position similar to that of the Jana Sangh (Anand 1976, pp. 282-283).

After sometime in January 1970 Sant Fateh Singh undertook the fast-unto-death over the status of the Chandigarh. Under the pressure of Sant Fateh Singh on 29th January 1970, the Government of India gave its award. It was a package

deal to accommodate the terms of the both Punjab and Haryana. According to terms of the award: (i) Chandigarh would remain a Union Territory for another five years, at the end of which it would be transferred to Punjab, (ii) Fazilka and Abohar towns along 104 villages in the two tehsil, at present in Punjab's rich cotton belt, will be transferred to Haryana, the state of Haryana being allowed a furlong-wide corridor through Punjab's territory to link itself with Fazilka area, (iii) A Commission will be appointed, in consultation with the Government of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, to recommend territorial adjustments on the basis of contiguity of linguistic regions, (iv) Transfer of Fazilka villages to Haryana will be made along with the implementation of recommendations on Chandigarh and the proposals of the Commission on territorial adjustment, (v) The Government of India would make a grant of Rs.10 crores and a loan of Rs.10 crores to the Government of Haryana to construct its new capital within a period of five years, (vi) In regard to Bhakra and Beas dams, the communiqué said that such modifications in the arrangements are necessary and will be considered later in the interest of the beneficiary states (Ibid., p. 284).

There were riots in Haryana, though the Government of Haryana accepted the award. The Sant and Akali Dal welcomed the award. The Jana Sangh and some sections of the Akalis clamoured that the Punjab Government should reject the transfer of Fazilka areas to Haryana. There were Anti-Sant demonstrations Gurnam Singh was urged to resign. In March 1970 there was a constitutional crisis that led to the overthrow of the Gurnam Singh's ministry by the majority group of Akali Dal. It was a sequel of development inside the Akali Dal which stood divided between the supporters of Sant Fateh Singh and Gurnam Singh on 25th March 1970. The appropriation bill was rejected by 44 to 22 votes. Those who voted against it were: 35 Akalis, 7 Jana Sangh members and 2 CPM MLAs. Thus the Akalis themselves had overthrown their ministry. The Congress, however, made a belated declaration that it would extend its 'unconditional support' to the Chief Minister Gurnam Singh. But the majority was with Prakash Singh Badal, the new leader of the Akali Dal (Sant) (Ibid., pp. 284-285). Thus second ministry of Gurnam Singh came to an end due to faction. This coalition also proved unsuccessful coalition.

On 27th March 1970 a new Akali Jana Sangh coalition ministry was installed in the Office, headed by Prakash Singh Badal. But in June 1970 the Jana Sangh withdrew its support and joined the opposition benches. Even though Badal's ministry was reduced to a minority, it continued in office after it arrived at some understanding with the Congress which now supported it without itself participating in the ministry. The reason why the Jana Sangh felt out with the Badal Government was the controversy over the extension of the jurisdiction of the newly established Guru Nank Dev University, the exclusion of Hindi by the Punjabi University from its medium of instruction and the lack of Akali support for a new University at Jalandhar. Thus, the entire controversy revolved around the language problem (Fidia 1984, p. 165).

At the national level Congress fragmented and two factions emerged Congress(O) and Congress(R). Congress supported the Akali Dal on few conditions such as the Dal must furnish some proof of its progressive and secular outlook and should follow the economic programme of the Congress(R). The Akalis promised, that they would lend support to the ruling Congress in the Parliament and would contest not more than 4 Parliamentary seats from Punjab and support the Congress on other nine Parliamentary constituencies (Anand 1976, p. 287). Congress(R) and CPI proved highly fruitful and resulted in winning 12 out of 13 Parliamentary seats from Punjab (Fadia 1984, p. 165).

In June 1971, the Akali Dal ministry was again in trouble from its internal dissensions – too many MLAs wanted too many rewards such as: ministries etc. The Congress(R) was also working for the overthrow of the Akali ministry. Prakash Singh Badal came to know about the plan in time and he had submitted his resignation, advising the Governor to dissolve the Vidhan Sabha for fresh elections. Governor accepted his advice. The President on Governor's report issued a proclamation of emergency on 15th June 1971, placing Punjab under the President's Rule for the second time since November 1966. There was much relief in the state on the exit of the Akali Ministry and it led to the end of the horse trading among legislators and dissolution of the assembly (Anand 1976, p. 287). Fresh elections to the Punjab assembly were held in March, 1972 (Ibid., p. 290).

Thus it can be said that the period from 1966 to 17th March 1971 was a period of political and ministerial instability in the state.

Formation of the government by Akalis with the support of Jana Sangh and later on with the outside support of the Congress clearly indicates the features of coalition politics in the state, interest of Jana Sangh and congress in supporting the Akalis also indicate that these parties realized the importance and permanence of regional parties. Both of them did not try to take effective steps to enhance their mass base among the Sikh community. Rather they tried to accommodate their interests through the Akalis in the state. This trend in the state politics clearly indicates that regional parties strengthen their position in the states and their bargaining for Parliamentary seats with the Congress also reflects their rising aspirations for the national power system.

In 1972 when Assembly Elections held, the Congress contested it in alliance with CPI. There was no other electoral alliance in the state. The Congress returned as the dominant single party with 66 seats in the house of 104 members. The Akalis were humbled and won only 24 seats. The Jana Sangh was completely eliminated. A new ministry under the leadership of Giani Zail Singh was sworn in on 17th March 1972 that ended the era of instability time being (Fidia 1984, pp. 165-166).

Due to defeat in the 1972 elections, the more nationalistic Akalis urged a return to a more Sikh-based orientation for the Akali Dal. In 1973, the Anandpur Sahib resolution was drafted, that defined the Sikhs as "Qaum" (nation) and called for a radical devolution of the powers from the centre to the states, the religious, political and economic policies outlined in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was designed to appeal to the Sikh nationalists (Mitra 2006, pp. 93-94). The first ever clear expression of the Akali's view on various dimensions of their autonomy demand was found in the Resolution that was adopted at Shri Anandpur Sahib in October 1973 by Working Committee and finally ratified by the All India Akali Conference in October 1978 at Ludhiana. Though the Anandpur Sahib resolution aimed at spelling out the demands of the Akali Dal, clearly mention whether all the Akali segments participated in formation of resolution and support the

proposals of resolutions. In Anandpur Sahib Resolution Akalis demanded autonomy to the state within the federal set-up and that there was not even a tinge of secession in it, the resolution goes to the extent of demanding that all powers except the defence, foreign affairs, communication, railways and currency should be handed over to the state. As if this was not enough, even the power to frame its own constitution has been demanded for Punjab. In fact the Akali leaders have after cited the Russian analogy in this connection thereby asserting that even the right to secede from the Union does not go against the unity and integrity of the nation (Kumar 1988, pp; 110-111). Thus the Akali's demanded a big change in federal status of the Indian Constitution through this resolution.

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution, adopted in October 1973, called not only for restricting the central governments jurisdiction to only four subjects but also raised once again, the familiar bogey of discrimination against Sikhs, saying religion was not safe without sovereignty. The political goal of the Dal was described as a state in which the Sikhs would be in a commanding position of the power. This phase in Akali politics continued till 1975 when the Emergency was imposed (Datta 1993, pp. 66-67). After declaration of Emergency Akali Dal began the 'Save Democracy Morcha', as a result, 40,000 Akalis were arrested (Mitra 2006, p. 94).

The aims of Save Democracy Morcha and the Akali stand during the 1977 Parliamentary elections made it clear that, apart from being a socio-religious body of the Sikhs, the Akali Dal was a political party in the real sense (Narang, 1989, p. 102). During the national emergency (1975-1977) the Akali Dal ran into troubled waters due to arrest of the main leaders of the party. After the lifting of the emergency in 1977, the Akali Dal contested the elections as an ally of the Janta Party and CPI(M) to restore Democracy, Fundamental Rights, and Rule of Law. This new combination won 90 seats in assembly (Akali 58, Janata Party 25, CPI(M) 7). The Congress could win only 17 seats, the CPI and independents 8 and 2 respectively. A 16-member Akali-Janata coalition ministry under the leadership of Prakash Singh Badal was sworn in on 23rd June 1977. The CPI(M) did not join the government. It preferred to give its support from outside (Fidia 1984, p. 166).

In the initial stages the functioning of the Badal ministry bore a close resemblance to the line followed at the Centre by the Janata Government. However, relations between the Akali Dal and the Janata Party deteriorated within less than a year. It was not due to growing misunderstanding between the two principal partners but because of the intra-party factional fighting within the Akali Dal. The top Akali leadership was divided into two groups – the Ministerialists led by the Chief Minister and the Organisational led by the Party Chief Jagdev Singh Tohra. The organizational leaders wanted the Akali Dal to break away from the Jana Sangh constituent of the Janata Party and wanted to join the Charan Singh – Raj Narain group. On the contrary, the Chief Minister tried to continue the alliance with the Janata party. When the Janata Party divided at the Centre, the organizational wing of the Akali Dal became vocal in its support for the Charan Singh – Raj Narain group. Finally, it was decided that the Akali MPs at Delhi would remain neutral for the time being. The Janata Party at once directed all their five ministers at the state level coalition to resign from the government which they did on 3rd August 1979. The Badal ministry was reduced to a minority. Even then, it continued in office till the dissolution of the state Assembly by the Congress (I) government at the centre on 17th February 1980 (Ibid., pp. 166-167). The second phase of coalition experiment was failed due to conflicts among the party members and coalition partners. It was second time when, Akali dominated coalition failed. But the Dal became equally important at the national level.

In the eighth Assembly Election held in 1980, the state assembly was dissolved by the Congress. Nine State Assemblies were dissolved on 17th February 1980. On the ground that they lost their mandate in the light of the Lok Sabha elections in January 1980, as the Janata Government acted in 1977 (Ibid., p. 167). Like in many other states of North-India, the Congress recaptured its dominance in the state of Punjab after the May 1980 Vidhan Sabha polls. The Akalis got only 37 seats (with 26.7 per cent votes) out of 73 that it contested. This time there was some change in the electoral alliances. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), the successor of the erstwhile Jana-Sangh, decided to go alone in the elections. The CPI which had on many occasions supported the Congress became a partner in a joint front with the Akali Dal and the CPM. This alliance was

described as a political necessity which contested almost all the seats in cooperation (Kumar 1988, p. 114). The BJP could win only one seat in Punjab. The Congress (U) as well as the other small parties failed to win any seats (Fidia 1984, p. 168).

The party manifesto of the Akali Dal for the 1980 Vidhan Sabha polls once again emphasized the old demands ranging from the issue of Punjabi-speaking areas and the demands for internal autonomy to the modification of the formula for the distribution of Ravi-Beas water. The manifesto also pledged to take away from the centre the power to dissolve the Vidhan Sabhas. After losing power in the 1980 elections, the Dal continued to raise these demands from various forums (Kumar 1988, p. 112). Election results of 1980 indicate that alliance formation affects the voters' psyche. In this election BJP did not join Akali's that affected the performance of both the parties. They were not able to catch the votes of masses.

However, after the electoral defeat of 1980, the Akali Dal faced a serious challenge for leadership from Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and the All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF), who derived most of their support from the poorer to middle-income Jat Sikhs. Bhindranwale was the leader of a small Sikh seminary aspiring to promote himself as a leader in the community. In 1978, he precipitated a violent clash with the Nirankaris, a revisionist sect of Sikhism. The incident marked the beginning of the radicalization of Sikh politics that swept through the Punjab in the 1980s and 1990s. After losing power in 1980, the Akali returned to extra-parliamentary agitation against the Central government. In September 1981, the party declared the start of the 'Dharm Yudh Morcha' (Holy War) and presented forty-five demands to Mrs. Indira Gandhi on the basis of Anandpur Sahib Resolution. With the approach of the General Elections of 1985, Indira Gandhi transformed the 'Punjab problem' into a 'Sikh threat' that was nationalized and placed outside the bounds of institutional politics (Matra 2006, p. 94).

After Bhindranwale arrested, the Akali leaders made his unconditional release their first priority. After his release one month later, he joined the Akali leaders and was able to keep the party on a strongly militant course. In December

1983, Bhindranwale left the Akali Dal and continued with the armed struggle together with the AISSF. The growing violence in Punjab continued unabated, and six months later the government ordered the army into the Golden Temple at Amritsar to carry Operation Bluestar. After a week of heavy fighting, Bhindranwale and his associate Amrik Singh were dead, and a high security counter – offensive forced the militants underground. Virtually all the mainstream Akali politicians were in jail, including Badal and Longowala. In the period following operation Bluestar, the agitation for autonomy escalated into a clearly secessionist movement (Ibid., p. 94).

The failures of the negotiations with the central government that began in October 1981 led to the intensification of the second phase of Akali agitation that ultimately led to the Operation Bluestar followed by Operation Woodrose. Militancy in Punjab that was already simmering in the form of the rise of Bhindranwale received further impetus after these repressive acts of the centre. The anti-Sikh riots that followed in Delhi and other parts of India further led to the alienation of the Sikh community (Kumar 2004, p. 1515-1520).

In the 1985 elections in Punjab after 1984, the Akali Dal romped home to victory. Again, as with the BJP in Delhi, this was not so much because of its popularity as on account of the Akalis becoming the only credible alternative to the Congress. The Akalis, despite the victory, were in disarray in the state. Throughout the period of militancy, the Akalis had been marginalized in Punjab, unable to decide whether they should adopt a stance sympathetic to the militants or take firm position against them. Whatever little political resistance was being offered to the militants came from smaller parties like the CPI, whose leader Satpal Dang was nationally recognized as one who was bravely opposing militancy (Thakurata & Raghuraman 2007, p. 365).

Just before the 1985 elections, however, the Akalis had made a serious bid to get back into the thick of Punjab politics. The congress, now led by Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi, was desperately seeking ways to remain relevant in the politics of the state. The accord signed between Rajiv Gandhi and Sant Harcharan Singh Longowala, the Akali Dal President, was a result of this convergence of

necessities between the two traditional rivals in the Punjab politics. The accord sought to convey the impression that it was addressing most of the genuine concerns of Punjab and the Sikhs. Thus, it provided for Chandigarh – which was a Union Territory that served as the capital for both Punjab and neighbouring Haryana – to be transferred to the Punjab. It also stipulated that any river-water sharing arrangement involving Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan would ensure that Punjab's farmers did not get less water than they were already getting (Ibid., pp. 365-366).

The accord was denounced as 'surrender' of Punjab's interests by the militants. The crucial question of autonomy of the state, they pointed out, had not been adequately addressed. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution – a document asking for greater autonomy had been effectively consigned to the dust heap since the accord merely said that it would be referred to the 'Sarkaria commission' which was dealing with centre-state relations (Ibid., p. 366). Longowala was assassinated in August 1985, even as the campaign for the September 1985 Assembly Elections were on. The transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, which should have taken place on 26th January, 1986 according to the Rajiv Longowala Accord never, took place. The much-touted accord had effectively been buried within months of it being signed (Ibid., p. 366).

The 1985 Assembly and Lok Sabha Elections took place in the context of the Rajiv–Longowala Accord. In 1985, assembly elections, the Congress secured 32 seats with 38 per cent votes and the Akalis secured 73 seats with 38 per cent votes (Wallace & Roy, p. 2003, p. 380). Surjit Singh Barnala, was able to lead the Akali Dal to its first majority government in the Punjab Assembly Elections (Mitra 2006, p. 95).

The victory of Akali Dal was due to the failure of Rajiv-Longowala accord. After the failure of Rajiv–Longowala accord, the Akalis, who had an absolute majority in the state legislature, witnessed growing militancy and increasing communal polarization. These developments led to heightened acrimony between the moderates and the extremists within Akali Dal. The continued efforts to create divisions within the different factions of the Akali Dal by the centre further

weakened the support base of the moderates leading to the subsequent dismissal of Barnala government in 1987, and President Rule was imposed (Kumar 2004). Akali Dal came under the firm control of extremists and the elements supportive of militancy. The situation remained the same even after the victory of Akali Dal (Mann) in November 1989 Parliamentary Elections. The party now clearly stood for the right to self-determination under the Presidentship of Simranjit Singh Mann that subsequently found expression in the form of the Amritsar Declaration. The marginalization of the two moderate factions of Akali Dal led by Prakash Singh Badal and Surjit Singh Barnala was evident as the two put together managed to win only 6.65 per cent of the votes polled and could not able to win a single seat (Ibid.,).

After the imposition of President's Rule in 1987, politics in Punjab took a back seat and so did the Akali Dal. The confrontation between the administration, in-particular between the police – and the militants took center stage. As so often happens in such situations, innocents were often caught in the crossfire, literally and metaphorically. While the police was cracking down on those suspected of being sympathetic to the militants, the militants too were terrorizing innocent people into providing them shelter and money. Gradually, the militants lost their ideological edge and became increasingly seen as extortionists. Sikh militancy lost its support base in Punjab combined with strong arm tactics by the police, led by K.P.S. Gill this helped to bring militancy under the control by the beginning of the 1990s (Thakurata & Raghuraman 2007, p. 366).

When the P.V. Narasimha Rao government announced its decision to hold elections to the State Assembly in 1992, almost every party except the Congress protested by saying the situation on the ground was hardly conducive to the conduct of a free and fair poll (Ibid., p. 366). In 1992 both the Akali Dal factions led by Mann and Badal boycotted the Parliamentary Elections as well as the State Assembly Elections that took place one year after the 1991 General Elections under President rule thereby undermining the legitimacy of the victory of the Congress. The voter turnout in the 1992 elections was 20 per cent, the lowest Punjab had ever witnessed. Despite this, the political process in Punjab had unmistakably resumed.

The Akalis, who had been drifting aimlessly till this stage found once again that they had been given an emotive issue by default, since the Congress was identified with the excesses of the police during the militancy years, the Akalis were the obvious rallying point for those demanding action against police officers who had exceeded their brief and made innocents suffer. In the next elections in 1997, therefore, it came as no surprise that the Akali Dal emerged as a comfortable winner (Ibid., p. 367). The analysis of the period from 1980 to 1992, shows that the Punjab was facing bad situation due to two traditional rivals – Akali Dal was demanding autonomy with great zeal and Centre was opposing such demands through Operation Bluestar and other tactics. Akali Dal passed such resolution *during this period that laid a path to other political parties of different states, to demand more powers for the states.* This period, can be stated in Punjab politics as the period of terrorism. It is also arguable that the Akali Dal always demanded autonomy when it was in the opposition. But when it formed the government, Dal never demanded it.

After the control of militancy there was another development, that was the foundation of Shiromani (United) Akali Dal. Shiromani (United) Akali Dal came into existence in 1994 uniting as many as six factions of Akali Dal in the name of “Panthic” unity primarily due to the efforts of Bhai Manjit Singh, the then acting Jathedar of Akal Takht, the seat of the temporal power for the Sikhs. However, the Akali Dal (Badal) remained separate. Gradually, however, as the urge for peace became strong Akali Dal (Badal) emerged as the dominant faction being able to integrate almost all the constituents of United Akali Dal with the notable exception of Akali Dal (Mann) (Kumar 2004, p. 1517).

In the 1996 General Elections, the Akali had a seat sharing agreement with the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party). During the 1997 the State Assembly Election, the Akali Dal and the BJP had a seat sharing agreement (from 1980 to 1996 there was no alliance between Akali and Jana Sangh). In alliance twenty-four seats were allotted to the BJP, urban seats that the Akalis on their own would not have expected to win, out of which the BJP won 18. The Akalis won 75 out of 94 contested. Given that there are 117 seats, the Akalis had a clear majority. Still according to a prominent politician from the BJP, it was Badal who insisted on the

BJP joining the government, in fact stating that he would not take the oath of office until the BJP agreed to part of the government (Wallace & Roy 2007, p. 128). This was the second time when Akalis got clear majority in the assembly. First it got clear majority in 1985 and the government failed to work for full tenure. The government formed in 1997 completed its tenure. It was the first time when Akali government proved as a stable government. In 1997 Prakash Singh Badal became Chief Minister third time. The 1997 Assembly Elections witnessed the worst ever performance by the Congress, which secured only 14 seats with 26 per cent of the votes (Wallace & Roy 2003, p. 384).

Parliamentary Elections and Assembly Elections since 1996 have continued to reflect a shift in the electoral politics of SAD that was first visible in the 1997 elections in the sense that politico – economic issues (development, roads, bridges, octroi, free power and water, traders demands, water for Punjab farmers, fiscal governance, institutionalized corruption) replaced the ethno religious issues like Anandpur Sahib Resolution, transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, Anti-Sikh riots or take encounters, as was the case with the 1992 Elections. The end of militancy and revival of democratic institutions witnessed the new found Akali focus on Punjabi identity than the ‘Panthic’ identity as has been reflected in the Common Minimum Programmes of Akali Dal and BJP since 1997. Also discernible is the shift from anti-centre stand to cooperative federalism and from a politics of confrontation to peace and Hindu-Sikh unity as mentioned in all the Akali Dal election manifestos since 1997. Such a shift in the political agenda of Akali Dal represented the yearning of the people in today’s post-militancy Punjab for break from Gurudwara politics and a hope for lasting peace and prosperity (Kumar 2004).

In 2002 Assembly Elections, the Congress got majority with 62 seats and 36.5 per cent of the votes, BJP-3, CPI-1, SAD-41 5.7, 1.7, 30.5 per cent votes polled respectively. In this election BJP and Akali alliance seats and vote share gone down comparatively from 1997. The victory of the Congress alliance during the 2002 Assembly Election was largely credited to increasing presence of the alliance among the urban voter (Ibid). The above fact shows that after militancy Punjab got political stability. The (2002) government also worked for full term.

In 2007 Assembly Elections were held. The outcome of the February 2007 Assembly Elections in Punjab is likely to cement the ties between Akali Dal and the BJP. The alliance of the two-parties got a comfortable majority, winning 67 seats in the 117 – member assembly, but unlike in the past the Akalis did not have a majority on their own. Therefore, the Akalis were forming a government that would be dependent on the BJP for its survival. The election results also made it obvious that the slew of corruption cases initiated against Parkash Singh Badal and his son Sukhbir by the Congress government (2002) headed by Amarinder Singh had not impressed the electorate. Amarinder's style of functioning, perceived by some as 'imperious' and smacking of his royal lineage, may also have added to the anti-incumbency sentiments and prevented the Congress from fighting the elections as a cohesive force (Thakurata & Raghuraman 2007, p. 368).

Anatomy of the state politics of Punjab clearly indicates the presence of Akali Dal as a political party since independence. Besides the fact that till 1967 Akali Dal was not able to capture the power at the state level. Still the issues floated by Dal determined the policy programmes of the national and state government. Akali Dal performed the role of effective opposition at the state level. Since 1967 Akali shared the power at the state level. The alliance strategy of the Akali Dal clearly indicates that they believe on the Sikh-Hindu unity. Their effectiveness has enhanced in the late eighties. In the state Bi-Polar party system has emerged. Akali Dal, BJP on the one side and on the other side the congress and others. Beside Hindu-Sikh fraternity, the other factor of BJP - Akali alliance is to counter the Congress. Factionalism is one of the prominent features of Akali politics. The party has been fragmented from time to time. It is evident that most of the time moderate segment of Akali Dal enjoys better position as compare to the militant segments.

The Akali Dal is a party which was formed for the liberation of Gurudwara from corrupt Mahants. But after independence it raised the demand of reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis. For that the Dal made many efforts. The Dal was successful in its aim in 1966. But the other Akali factions were not happy with it. Till 1966 Akali made many agitations against centre government to fulfill their demands. In 1967 the Dal was successful in election. The Dal formed