# Understanding the Lure of Bhindranwale in Global Context: Personal Reflections

**Mark Juergensmeyer**
*University of California, Santa Barbara, USA*

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Reflecting on the events of the 1980s and early 1990s, this paper has two major inter-related themes. Firstly, it tries to make sense of the growing close relationship between religion and politics and especially on rise in religion-related violence in large parts of the globe. Secondly, it focuses on the rise of insurgency in Punjab in the 1980s, associated with the rise in popularity of Bhindranwale, and tries to analyze whether the Punjab insurgency was unique to India or whether there were patterns visible that were replicated in other forms of religious politics emerging around the world. The paper provides a fascinating account of the Punjab militancy movement and especially the lure of Bhindranwale both in Punjab and Sikh diaspora.

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During the 1980s, I watched with mounting fear as a spiral of violence developed between Sikh militants and the government. How could such affable, intelligent people be swept up in an encounter that was so vicious, so unforgiving? I had lived in the Punjab for several years during the early part of my academic career when my focus was on the relationship between religion and politics in India in general and the Punjab in particular. Later in my career my attention turned toward the global rise of religion-related violence. And then came the Punjab insurgency of the 1980s.

I embarked on a project to try to understand why--to try to enter into the mindset of people whom I knew well and whom I had come to respect. I wanted to understand how some of the best and brightest of their generation of youth could be engaged in a confrontation that outsiders saw as so suicidal, so horrendous, and so beyond rationality. It is relatively easy to understand a movement that is motivated towards a strategic purpose-- that is, one created to gain ground, perhaps even literally ground in the sense of land and property to be taken. But when the war in which the militants who were engaged was so amorphous and

ideological - as the insurgency known as the Khalistan movement seemed to be - it was beyond easy comprehension. It appeared difficult to imagine how brave and intelligent people, most of them young men, could enter into the fray with such passion and with such risk to themselves. I wanted to know why.

I also wanted to know whether this situation was idiosyncratic to the Sikhs, or, for that matter, to India. In the 1980s violent movements of religious activism were infrequent phenomena. This was prior to the rise of Hamas, ISIS, rampaging Buddhists and Christian militias, and only the Islamic revolution in Iran bore witness to a new kind of virulent religious politics that in time would cast its shadow over much of the globe. At that time, in the 1980s, I wanted to know whether the characteristics of the Punjab situation were unique to India, or whether there were patterns that were replicated in other forms of religious politics emerging around the world.

But first I needed to understand what was happening in Punjab. I planned to take leave time from my teaching responsibilities at UC-Berkeley and return there, intending to interview the figurehead of the 1980s insurrection, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. But fate intervened. At first it was simply a matter of access, since the Punjab region was virtually walled off to foreigners. Nonetheless, I persisted. But then a whole new calamitous development occurred.

Operation Blue Star in 1984 sent shock waves around the world, including my quiet academic study in Berkeley. The invasion of the Darbar Sahib, known as the Golden Temple, the killing of Bhindranwale, the subsequent assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the savage massacre of thousands of Sikhs in Delhi created nothing less than a political earthquake. It not only challenged my travel plans, but also made my goal of interviewing the iconic figure of the insurgent movement impossible. Nonetheless, I was even more determined to return and to try to understand the situation from the inside, rather than the outside.

Soon after Operation Blue Star, I took a year off from the university and returned to the Punjab. I had already done some of my homework. Through the happy acquaintance with Prof Ranbir Singh Sandhu of Ohio State University, I was able to peruse speeches of Bhindranwale. Prof Sandhu had carefully collected a large trove of tapes that he transcribed and translated into English. These were eventually published, but he allowed me a sneak preview of them, which was invaluable in helping me understand the logic and appeal of this remarkable figure.[1]

Coming back to Punjab was something of a homecoming, allowing me to reacquaint myself with old friends and colleagues in Chandigarh, Jalandhar and Amritsar. It gave me access to friends and acquaintances who were familiar with the movement and understood its dynamics. I was also able to talk with a number of young activists who were involved in the movement that survived and thrived in the years after Operation Blue Star. What I discovered at that time continues to resonate through my work even today, some forty years later.[2]

Let me give an example. On one occasion I was able to meet with a group of Sikh militants who were members of a martyr brigade.[3] They were Sikh versions of what would later be thought of as Islamic martyrs, the suicide bombers associated with Hamas, al Qaeda, and ISIS. Late at night in the back room of a Gurdwara in Delhi, six young men entered the room. They were disguised when they came in—they had scarves over their faces so that initially I could not see them. They came in armed with guns and there was tension as they entered the room. Then they sat down and took off their scarves and I felt this wave of astonishment.

They were just teenagers, perhaps seventeen or eighteen years old. They reminded me of the undergraduates I had taught at Punjab University. I did not know them personally, but I felt I could have known any of them. Though they were battle-hardened and dedicated to their mission, there was nothing savage about their demeanor or their intensity. They exuded a compassion towards their people and towards their religious tradition. They were in some ways the best of the younger generation of Jat Sikhs, the privileged community within the Punjab. These were bright and promising young men who would ordinarily have been playing soccer and receiving prizes for their competition. But there they were, engaged in what was for them an extraordinary struggle. I found out later than none of them lived a year beyond our conversation.

On that day, however, they were very much alive. I could ask anything I wanted, I was told. Their English was not bad, and I knew enough Hindi and Punjabi to supplement it. I wanted to know why, just—why? They knew what I meant, but it was a question that was as perplexing to them as it was to me. To them it was so obvious. There was a great and historical conflict, a war in which they felt totally enmeshed. To them this war was so palpable.

> 'We're at a time of crisis,' they said. 'We're in a great moment of history and it's a time of conflict between good and evil. And

> we have a chance to make the difference.' Then another added, 'we have heard the battle call, we have to respond.'

For them to be soldiers in a great struggle was not only deeply ennobling, it was an intense experience that was almost redemptive in its quality. That is, they felt that they could take part in this struggle and not only protect their community but also be transformed in some way. I had a sense that whatever benefits they might have gotten in a material sense were unimportant. In the case of these Sikh martyrs there were no heavenly rewards and no virgins waiting. The reward for these young men was the experience of the struggle itself: the exhilarating feeling that they were part of something greater than themselves. Like religious transformation, it would not only bring great honor to their families but also redeem them personally. If they died, they would die in glory.

The battle itself was the lure that brought them into the struggle. In the most thorough examination of the characteristics of the Punjab militants in the 1980s, a study by a team of researchers from Guru Nanak Dev University that resulted in the book, *Terrorism in the Punjab,* by Harish Puri, Jagrup Singh Sekhon and Paramjit Singh Judge, the authors concur.[4] The thrill of combat was the attraction. "They were just caught up in the moment," one of the authors, Sekhon, told me.[5]

But it was not a pointless rampage. The insurgency had an overarching purpose, the protection of the Sikh community. And in Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale it had an exemplar and a leader. 'About Sant Bhindrawale,' I asked the young militants, 'why is he appealing to you?' 'Because he is honest,' they quickly said. They went on to say that he came from the soil, like them, and spoke not in the polished language of preachers and politicians, but in the earnest speech of their own friends and family. They felt he was speaking from the heart and was speaking the truth.

Listening to the tapes of Bhindranwale, I think I had a sense of what they were saying. He was not a polished orator, and seemed at times to growl when he spoke, and at other times to laugh and use homey examples to make his point. His rambling discourses mixed together Sikh history and theology with contemporary politics. But he spoke less like a politician than like the guy next door, or the uncle at the dinner table, that wanted to level with you about something he observed and thought that you should know.

He also was demanding. His message had an urgency about it, implying that the time was at hand to make a decision. The young men

who were listening to his message, Bhindranwale seemed to be saying, had to decide whether they were going to stand up for their faith and community, or succumb to the easy life of school and jobs and family, while all around them their tradition was on fire, laid siege by the enemies of their people.

Strangely this was a message I had heard before. It reminded me of the revival preachers that came to my area of America's rural Midwest. They told us that the time had come to decide whether we were on the side of the Lord or on the side of the devil. The young Sikh men in Bhindranwale's audience had to make the same choice.

I found myself thinking that it is only a bit of a stretch to see a link between my revival preachers in southern Illinois and Bhindranwale. He would look out over his sea of young Sikh men and see those who had cut their beards and those who were wearing slick pants and shiny shoes and say, 'you've strayed, you've strayed, you've been attracted to the easy path. You have gone against the Guru and the teachings of the book, and you've strayed. It's time now to make a decision. Are you going to get right with your faith?'

Bhindranwale, like my revival preachers, challenged his followers to straighten up, to make something out of their messy lives. And, of course, each of us has a messy life, which is why the message of religion speaks so quickly and sharply to the heart of everyone's private experience. Are we going to make something out of our messy lives, he wanted to know, and decide to be on the side of the right, to be soldiers for Truth?

The only difference between my revival preachers in Southern Illinois and Bhindranwale is that his followers were real soldiers. They had real targets, and the battle was not just a metaphor. The evil he spoke about was not just the shadowy sin that is within the heart of every person, but it was also externalized. In Bhindranwale's words, it was that evil woman who was 'born in the house of Brahmans,' as he put it, which was his way of talking about Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister.[6]

Bhindranwale reminded his followers of the concept of *miri-piri,* that Sikhism had authority both spiritually and politically. The conflict with the Indian government, therefore, he regarded as 'a struggle…for our faith, for the Sikh nation, for the oppressed.'[7] He implored his young followers to rise up and marshal the forces of righteousness. 'The Guru will give you strength,' he assured them.

In some ways the Punjab struggle was a more satisfying kind of war than the invisible war that my revival preacher talked about. Since the

enemy was not only within one's soul but also out in the world, the enemy could be more easily attacked. If you were a soldier in Bhindranwale's war, you could actually do something. You could actually put on your armament, get weapons, and do something about destroying evil.

Bhindranwale assured his followers that random violence was not sanctioned by the Sikh tradition. But he also said that the fight for justice and freedom from oppression sometimes demanded it. Though it was a sin to use one's weapons in a thoughtless violent way, 'it was an even greater sin to have weapons and not to seek justice.'[8]

In some ways, Bhindranwale preached the message that has been a part of every religious tradition. He talked about the battle - that almost Manichaean battle - between oppositions of good and evil, and the way in which one's own life could be purified by taking the stance of the good. In every case of religious militancy that I have studied I have found echoes of this cosmic war. I have found what one militia member called 'an aha experience.'

This 'aha experience' that the militant described was the lighting switch that suddenly turned on, illuminating the truth about a struggle, clarifying who was the enemy and who were the heroes. The young Sikh men I met in the dark room of a Delhi Gurdwara were eerily similar to militia militants around the world. All have said that the message of their prophets changed their lives, providing this 'aha experience.' It suddenly gave clarity when they were confused and angry and frustrated and humiliated.

The sense of humiliation was a remarkably common emotion, one described by almost everyone with whom I talked who was a supporter of, or involved in, movements of religion-related violence. When I talked with young militants in Punjab, there was a frequent refrain that Sikhs had been humiliated, had been treated as second class citizens and were increasingly deprived of the economic resources to make them strong.

I understood some of this from a political standpoint. Many of the early followers of Bhindranwale had been activists opposing the water rights policies that were undercutting Jat Sikh farmers' livelihoods. The increasing growth of urban Punjab society made the former Jat Sikh elite in the villages seem more and more like they were being upstaged and pushed aside by city folk. Perhaps none felt this sense of humiliation more strongly than the young Jat Singh men who saw their birthright as Punjab's privileged leaders vanishing before their eyes.

I have no way of knowing whether the militants in the Punjab militia felt a greater sense of humiliation than those who did not turn to violence, and yet it seemed to me that the frequency with which they characterized their struggle in this way indicated that this may have been the case. They said that they felt an enormous sense of frustration and humiliation over not being able to know what was going on or knowing what to do about it when the world appeared to be going out of control.

Then in the midst of their frustration many of them affirmed that they had experienced a clarifying insight, an 'aha experience.' The ideology of great warfare that they accepted suddenly made everything click into focus. It was in the midst of a blurry image of the world around them that the moral contours of life suddenly sharpened into view. 'Aha,' they seemed to say, 'now I know why I've been made to feel so humiliated and frustrated, it's because there's this evil enemy and it's out to control the world.'

But now they could do something about it, they could fight back. But more importantly than even fighting back in any kind of strategic and tactical way was to fight for the sake of fighting - in order to overcome the frustration, the utter frustration, that they felt about the world.

What the young Sikh warriors taught me was that the religious activism of their movement was not simply a struggle over land or politics. It was an existential struggle. Their social involvement had an intensely personal commitment, and it was motivated by the heady sense of spiritual fulfillment and the passion of a transcendent war. Their enemy was not, however, another religion: it was the a-religion, or irreligion as they imagined it, of modernity.

This observation led me to other parts of South Asia - Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and elsewhere in India - and to other parts of the world, especially the Middle East, to see if the emerging religious activism in these regions in the 1990s were similar in character to the antimodern activism of the Sikh militants in Punjab. The religious militancy in the 21st century has expanded to Europe and the United States. It is truly a global phenomenon. In many of these places issues of sovereignty and political control were touted as their goals, yet from the point of view of the militants themselves the passion and rhetoric of their activism was personal.

It seemed to me that in the post-modern era we have a post-verbal, image-driven kind of radical political message. It is conveyed by a kind of violence that is wholly different from traditional terrorism. These terrorist

acts are less tactical than symbolic. They are less engaged in a real struggle, one that has immediate goals and gains, than one that is transcendent. I began to think of it in the terms that were presented to me by the people with whom I was interviewing, as forms of war. I called it 'cosmic war,' by which I mean a war beyond human imagination, a war touched with religious weight. These are the existential wars of good and bad, of truth and evil that are part of the historical imaginations of every religious tradition.[9] But now they were present in our own age.

Let me indicate some of the implications about this way of thinking.

**1. These imagined battles are infused with religion**

One of my colleagues and an old friend, Prof Harish Puri, a political scientist who taught for many years at Guru Nanak University in Amritsar, chided me for lumping the Punjab insurgency of the 1980s into the same camp with movements of religious violence elsewhere in the world. He had lived through the maelstrom of the 1980s in Punjab and knew what he was talking about. Yes, it was violent, he affirmed, but it was not religious.

I think I knew what he meant. The insurgency was certainly not religious in the sense that it was a spiritual quest consisting of pious devotees. But it depends in part on what you mean by 'religion.'

When I came to Punjab years ago as a graduate student doing research on the movements for social change among lower caste villagers, my questions to them got stuck on that problematic word, 'religion.'

'What did I mean by that,' asked my Panjabi tutors - two graduate students at Punjab University, Mohinder Singh and Devinder Singh (now a famous photographer) when I asked them for their help in translating the English word 'religion' into Panjabi. They explained that there was no single word in Panjabi that encompassed the various meanings of religion in English. The word could mean *qaum,* a community or nation of faith; *panth,* a fellowship of devotees; *mazhab,* a set of beliefs; or *dharm,* moral law. What meaning of religion did I have in mind?

In the case of the activists involved in religion-related movements around the world, virtually none of them are *panthik* devotees or fixated on *mazhab* sets of beliefs. For many their 'religion' is a matter of *qaum,* of social identity. This same sense of religious identity has united the Sunni Arab supporters of ISIS against their Shi'a oppressors, for example, and motivates the Buddhists in Myanmar and the Christian militants in

Europe and the United States against what they fear is the spreading reach of Islam. So although the 'boys,' as the young Sikh militants were called, were not religious in a pious sense they thought they were defending their Sikh community.

There were also political and economic motivations. Every situation of religious activism has a social context in which economic and political issues have been important, though these issues have never been the whole story. In the case of the Punjab, I knew that young rural Sikhs had perfectly good reasons for being unhappy. Economically they saw their agricultural products receiving what they thought to be less than fair market; politically they felt their own authority was being undercut by the ruling Congress party; and socially they regarded their status and influence waning in comparison with the urban castes. But none of these things explained the vitriol and passion with which their opposition to the government was expressed.

The battle itself was the attraction. It was true, as Prof Jagrup Singh Sekhon told me, that young Jat Sikh men were swept up in the excitement of the moment, and many joined the battle for the thrill of it. But even that experience had a transcendent, even redemptive quality to it. They were transported into a different kind of reality, one that touched on sacred depths.

Moreover, there was the compelling figure of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was unabashedly religious. He was a preacher, a religious leader of an ashram. His messages were shot through with religious language and references to Sikh history. His speeches drew direct comparisons between the Sikh Gurus' conflicts with Moghul rulers and his own followers' engagement with the forces of contemporary secular Indian politics, whom he regarded as the Moghuls of today. Clearly, to anyone listening to these speeches, to join the fray was to participate in an ongoing moment in Sikh religious history.

In the Sikh case, as in cases of religious activism around the world, the religious ingredient changes the picture dramatically. For one thing it personalizes the conflict. It provides *personal rewards* - merit, redemption, honor - to those who struggle in conflicts that otherwise have only social benefits. It also provides *vehicles of social mobilization* that embrace vast numbers of supporters who otherwise would not be mobilized around social or political issues. In many cases, it provides an *organizational network* of local Gurdwaras and Jat Sikh comrades into which patterns of leadership and support may be tapped. It gives the legitimacy of *moral*

*justification* for political encounters. Even more important, it provides *justifications for violence* that challenge the state's monopoly on morally-sanctioned killing. Using Max Weber's dictum that the state's authority is always rooted in the social approval of the state to enforce its power through the use of bloodshed - in police authority, punishment, and armed defense - religion is the only other entity that can give moral sanction for violence and is therefore inherently at least potentially revolutionary.

So, the conclusion to my search for understanding these acts of violence is that these are extra-worldly responses to a worldly problem. They are ways of expressing the view that ordinary life has gone awry. In this sense it was not so much that religion was politicized, the opposite was also true: politics were religionized, seen in a transcendent frame. Social differences were cast into the grand terms of ultimate struggle, and political struggle became personal and for many also spiritual.[10]

**2. The enemy is the secular world and the secular state**

Though sometimes Hindu journalists and leaders were targeted by the young Sikh militants' wrath, ultimately the enemy was not another religious tradition but no religion at all: the secular government. In this sense the Punjab insurgency also shared a common foe with similar movements around the world.

Movements such as the Sikh rebellion in the Punjab were critiques of the stability and moral authority of the secular nation-state. In a paradoxical way, it seemed to me, the European Enlightenment's primary political creation, the modern nation-state, had been both criticized and propped up by the Enlightenment's old enemy, religion. In some cases religion became the ideological glue that holds together a sense of nationhood and supports a new kind of religious nation-state. Nationhood became a defining part of the Sikh rebellion in the Punjab - the 'Khalistan' movement, as it came to be called - even though Bhindranwale said that he neither favored nor disfavored the idea. For many who lost faith in the idea of secular nationalism, religion became the vehicle of collective identity, expressing what the Berkeley political scientist, John Lie, described as 'peoplehood,' the essential ingredient for the Enlightenment idea of the nation-state.[11]

**3. The struggle has a global reach**

The remarkable mobility of the world's population in an era of mass transportation and easy communication means that most religious communities are now dispersed across the planet. Hence religious activism is often transnational in its networks of operation and its bases of support. The concept of Khalistan was coined among expatriate Punjabis in the United Kingdom, and the first currency printed for the cause was done so in Canada.

It was in 1971 that Jagjit Singh Chohan began to promote the idea of a Khalistan when he was in London. He then took out an advertisement in *The New York Times* that raised funds for the fledgling movement. In 1980 Chohan joined forces with Sant Bhindranwale and proclaimed the establishment of Khalistan. The movement was born.

But it always had a global reach. Some of the major funding came from wealthy farmers in the San Joaquin valley of California. One of the most violent acts of terrorism was the bombing of Air India flight 182 travelling from Canada to India on June 23, 1985. A bomb exploded in the cargo hold over Ireland, killing all 329 people on board. It had been placed there by a Sikh passenger who checked in his luggage for the flight, but never boarded.

Subsequently Canada has been a groundswell of support for reviving the idea of Khalistan that has seriously undermined Canada-India relations. On June 18, 2023, Hardeep Singh Nijjar - a prominent member of the Canadian Khalistan movement - was shot dead by professional assassins outside his Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that there were 'credible allegations' linking the Indian government of Narendra Modi to this killing, an allegation that Modi immediately denied.

There has been support for a Khalistan revival in the United States as well. In the same year, 2023, the Indian government was implicated in an attempt to kill a Khalistani supporter, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York. A man said to be an intelligence agent for the Indian government, Nakhil Gupta, was arrested in the Czech Republic for arranging for a hit man who would be paid $100,000 for killing Pannun. Fortunately, the plot was uncovered before it could be carried out. Again, Modi denied any official ties to the Indian government.

**4. The struggle can vanish as quickly as it appeared**

Though there are signs of life in the Khalistan insurgency both in India and abroad, the active militant phase of the movement in the Punjab did not last forever. Though the intention of Operation Blue Star was to nip the movement in the bud and to destroy it, the effect of the raid on the sacred precincts in Amritsar was entirely the opposite. Sikhs around the world arose in righteous indignation, and the numbers of militants involved and the number of killings on both sides, by the militants and the police, expanded considerably in the years after 1984.

By 1992, however, the insurgency began to peter out, and by the middle of that decade it could be definitely described as finished. There is quite a bit of controversy about how the movement came to an end - whether it was due to increased police suppression, or due to the internal decay with the movement itself.

It was in an attempt to try to understand which was the case that prompted me to include the Punjab case as one of three that I examined for my book on how religious violence ends, *When God Stops Fighting*.[12]

I returned to India and met with Kanwar Pal Singh Gill, who has been lauded as the 'Supercop' who brought the insurgency to an end. He was Director General of police in Punjab from 1988-90, and again for the decisive years of 1991-1995. Now in retirement, I was able to chat with him in what remained of an old palace in Vrindavan, on the banks of the Jumna river, where an American woman had given him shelter. He was bundled up in front of an old-fashioned coil heater, nursing his bad health, and in fact he died a few months after I met with him.

Nonetheless his voice was clear, and K.P.S. Gill was vigorous in defending the role that made him famous. After 1991 he launched an all-out assault on the Punjab militants, slaughtering hundreds. He is said to have put a bounty on the heads of the young men and no questions would be asked. Accusations of police terrorism and extrajudicial killings have persisted to this day. In Gill's view, however, it was all justified. 'They were all thugs,' he told me. He thought that this justified everything he did in an effort to restore public order and end the decade-long rebellion.

Though Gill received credit for terminating the insurrection, I was not fully persuaded that his actions were solely responsible for the ending. For one thing, his earlier tenure as head of the Punjab police from 1988-1990 produced no obvious results and the first year of his all-out assault,

1991, was the bloodiest of the entire decade-long encounter, with hundreds of lives lost on both sides, militants and police.

Moreover, the perspective of those who had been in the movement was quite different. They blamed internal decay within the cadres of militants and a rising hostility from the populace that had tacitly tolerated them. This corresponded with my studies of the ending of other religion-related movements, from ISIS in Iraq to the Moro movement for Muslim separatism in Mindanao in the Philippines, where internal chaos and the loss of popular support were the primary ingredients in a movement's failure. My impression that these were also the main causes of the movement's collapse in Punjab was buttressed by conversations with former militants there both recently and years ago soon after the era of violence came to an end in the 1990s.

In 1996 I returned to villages in Punjab that had been most affected. The villages had a war-ravaged look to them, an air of fatigue as if they had been swept by a hurricane, and now they were left to gather up the pieces. I came to Sultanwind, once the center of the storm of struggle from where many of the young leaders had emerged, never to return again. A few of the foot soldiers were still there, many of them resentful over their harsh treatment by the Indian government. I asked if they would rejoin the fight if it returned. 'The movement is over,' one of the former militants told me. What he meant by that was not only that many of his colleagues were killed or in hiding, but also that the mood of public support that had sustained the movement had dissipated and was gone.[13]

I later talked with an old leader of the Khalistan Commando Force, Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, who went into exile in Pakistan and then Switzerland during the height of the struggle, only to return to the Punjab years later and after several court hearings and a brief incarceration was living on the family farm near Batala, north of Amritsar. I asked him when he knew that the uprising was finally over. He thought for a moment and gave several answers, before pausing and uttering what seemed to be the decisive point. 'We knew it was over,' he said softly, 'when the villagers turned against it.'

Like summer storms, the passion of religious war can seize the consciousness of a people and allow for the most vicious acts of violence. Then just as rapidly the mood can change, the spiritual charge can dissipate, and the political differences return to a more worldly and civil form of interaction. The cultures of violence in which these activists are caught are ephemeral things. Although they dip into their spiritual

traditions for images and examples that will support their efforts, these battles can be fleeting fantasies.

In Sultanwind and the other villages, there was calm after the storms. The powerful image of warfare now seemed distant, no longer related to the struggles in the world around it. The young militants who had been called 'the boys' by most Punjabis, these overly-mature youngsters thrust into guerrilla war, were no longer boys. They were becoming men, though with memories of a bitter past.

**Notes**

[1] Jarnaila Singha and Ranbir Singh Sandhu, eds., *Struggle for Justice: Speeches and Conversations of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale*, Dublin Ohio: Sikh Religious and Educational Trust, 1999.

[2] My first article on Sikh violence was published as 'The Logic of Religious Violence,' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, reprinted in David Rapoport, ed. *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 172–93.

[3] This story and other parts of this essay are included in my article, 'From Bhindranwale to Bin Ladin: The Global Rise of Religious Violence' published in Barun Mitra and Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, eds., *Security Challenges and the Liberal Response*, Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2006

[4] Harish K. Puri, Paramjit Singh Judge, and Jagrup Singh Sekhon, *Terrorism in Punjab: Understanding Grassroots Reality*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1999.

[5] Author's interview with Jagrup Singh Sekhon, Amritsar, August 18, 2017.

[6] Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, 'Address to the Sikh Congregation,' transcript of a sermon given in the Golden Temple in November 1983 (translated by Ranbir Singh Sandhu, April 1985, and distributed by the Sikh Religious and Educational Trust, Dublin, Ohio); and 'Two Lectures,' July 19, 1983, and September 20, 1983 (translated from the videotaped originals by R. S. Sandhu and distributed by the Sikh Religious and Educational Trust, Dublin, Ohio).

[7] Bhindranwale, 'Address to the Sikh Congregation.'

[8] Bhindranwale, 'Two Lectures.'

[9] See my *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Fourth Edition, 2017).

[10] This comparative study of movements of religious nationalism was published as *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); the revised updated version was published as *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

[11] John Lie, *Modern Peoplehood* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[12] Mark Juergensmeyer, *When God Stops Fighting: How Religious Violence Ends*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2022.

[13] I appreciate the assistance of Prof Harish Puri and Prof Jagrup Singh Sekhon, both associated with the Department of Political Science, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, in facilitating my visits to Sultanwind and other villages.