Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale: A Charismatic Authority and His Ideology

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Abstract
Sikh leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's militant and masculinist discourses were embraced by Punjabi Sikhs because of his presence as a charismatic authority, a concept first developed by sociologist Max Weber to understand the conditions surrounding and personal qualities of a figure which attracts followers. The rebellion he led in Punjab resulted from his radical exploitation of issues concerning the Sikh community. Religion was wielded as a tool, legitimizing Sikh violence as commanded by the Gurus. Radical interpretations of Sikh scripture and folklore were initially preached to rural, less educated crowds. While his sermons brought out their frustrations with the government, his charisma allowed him to manipulate young men, his largest demographic of supporters, into embracing violence. This study analyzes Bhindranwale from the perspective of the people that supported him. By identifying multiple social factors through which to understand Bhindranwale's reign, this study exhibits his importance in understanding Sikhism in Modern India.

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Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, original name Jarnail Singh, (born 1947, Rodey [or Rode], India—died June 6, 1984, Amritsar), Sikh religious leader and political revolutionary whose campaign to establish a separate Sikh state led to a violent and deadly confrontation with the Indian military in 1984. Bhindranwale was known for his charisma as well as his knowledge of the scripture and history of Sikhism. He was asked by Zail Singh of the Indian National Congress [Congress Party], who later became the president of India, to align with them in their effort to break the hold of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD; Supreme Akali Party) on rank-and-file Sikhs. According to the government authorities, hundreds of people were killed in the action, including Bhindranwale. FIU Digital Commons. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale: A Charismatic Authority and His Ideology. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale: A Charismatic Authority and His Ideology.  FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY Miami, Florida. Jarnail singh bhindranwale: a charismatic authority and his ideology. A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in RELIGIOUS STUDIES by John Paul Cibotti 2017. To: Dean John F. Stack Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs. This thesis, written by John Paul Cibotti, and entitled Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale: A Charismatic Authority and His Ideology, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale ([dʒəɾnɛɭ sɪŋɡ pɪŋɖɾaŋɖɾə]; born Jarnail Singh Brar) [2] (2 June 1947 – 6 June 1984) was a leader of the Sikh organization Damdami Taksal, and supporter of the Anandpur Resolution. He gained prominence due to his involvement in the 1978 Sikh-Nirankari clash. He symbolized the revivalist, extremist and terrorist movement in the 1980s in Punjab. In 1983, to escape arrest, he along with his militant cadre occupied and fortified the Sikh shrine Akal Takht. Operation Blue Star was launched to remove him and the armed militants from the Golden Temple complex. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (Punjabi: [dʒəɾnɛɭ sɪŋɡ pɪŋɖɾaŋɖɾə]; born Jarnail Singh Brar; 12 February 1947 – 6 June 1984) was the fourteenth jathedar, or leader, of the prominent orthodox Sikh religious institution Damdami Taksal. He was an advocate of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. He gained national attention after his involvement in the 1978 Sikh-Nirankari clash.