

What is the Khalistan Movement?

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What's in today's article?

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- What is the Khalistan movement?
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- News Summary: Canada investigates Indian government link to killing of Khalistani activist
- Background

Why in news?

- Canada is investigating possible links between the Indian government and the assassination of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada.
- The Canadian government also said that it has **expelled a top Indian diplomat** as a consequence.

What is the Khalistan movement?

- About

- The Khalistan movement is a fight for a separate, sovereign Sikh state in present day Punjab (both India and Pakistan).
- The movement was crushed in India following **Operation Blue Star** (1984) and **Operation Black Thunder** (1986 and 1988).
 - Operation Blue Star began on June 1, 1984 to flush out militants from the Golden Temple and neutralise Bhindranwale.
- The Khalistan **movement is banned in India**, where officials see it and its affiliated groups as a national security threat.
- But the movement still has some support in north India, as well as beyond, in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom which are home to a sizable Sikh diaspora.

• **Khalistan and Canada**

- As per the 2021 Canadian census, Sikhs account for 2.1 per cent of Canada's population, and are the country's fastest growing religious group.
 - After India, Canada is home to the largest population of Sikhs in the world.
- In 2002, Toronto-based Punjabi-language weekly **Sanjh Savera** greeted Indira's death anniversary with a cover illustration of her murder.
 - The magazine received government advertisements, and is now a prominent daily in Canada.
- Last year in Brampton – home to Canada's largest Sikh population – a pro-Khalistan organisation known as Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) held a so-called **referendum on Khalistan**.

When did the movement start and why?

• **Origin lies in India's independence and subsequent Partition along religious lines**

- The Punjab province, which was divided between India and Pakistan, saw some of the worst communal violence and generated millions of refugees.
- Lahore, the capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's great Sikh Empire, went to Pakistan, as did holy Sikh sites including Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.
- While most Sikhs found themselves in India, they were a small minority in the country, making up around 2 per cent of the population.

• **Struggle for greater autonomy & States Reorganisation Commission**

- The political struggle for greater autonomy began around the time of Independence, with the **Punjabi Suba Movement** for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state.
- The **States Reorganisation Commission**, in its 1955 report, rejected this demand, but in 1966, after years of protest, the state of Punjab was reorganised to reflect the Punjabi Suba demand.
- The erstwhile Punjab state was trifurcated into the Hindi-speaking, Hindu-majority states of **Himachal Pradesh** and **Haryana**, and the Punjabi-speaking, Sikh-majority **Punjab**.

• **Anandpur Sahib Resolution**

- In 1973, leaders of the Akali Dal met at the sacred town of Anandpur Sahib, the birthplace of the Khalsa.
- They released a list of demands that would guide the political path of the Akali Dal.
- Among other things, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution demanded autonomy for the state of Punjab, identified regions that would be part of a separate state, and **sought the right to frame its own**

internal constitution.

- The Akali Dal was trying to cash in on the growing demand for an autonomous state which had emerged alongside the Punjabi Suba movement.
 - This demand had gone global by 1971 — when an advertisement appeared on The New York Times proclaiming the birth of Khalistan.

• Rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

- Many in Punjab sought to go beyond just a demand for greater autonomy. One such man was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.
- Bhindranwale was a charismatic preacher who soon positioned himself as the authentic voice of the Sikhs.
- He found a captive audience in the state's youth, especially those in the lower rungs of the social ladder, and massed a massive following.
- By 1982, he took up residence inside the Golden Temple, directing demonstrations and clashes with the police.
- The movement was geared towards the demands first articulated in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.
- However, amidst growing religious polarisation, sectarian violence, and Bhindranwale's own harsh rhetoric against Hindus, the then government declared the movement tantamount to secession.

• The aftermath of Operation Blue Star

- This operation gravely wounded the Sikh community around the world. It also galvanised the demand for Khalistan.
- Punjab saw the worst violence, becoming the hub of a long drawn-out insurgency that lasted till 1995.

News Summary: Canada investigates Indian government link to killing of Khalistani activist

Background:

• Death of the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief

- Hardeep Singh Nijjar, wanted by the Indian government, was killed in a targeted shooting in June this year.
 - In 2022, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) declared a Rs 10 lakh reward on Nijjar.
 - This was after he was accused of conspiring to kill a Hindu priest in Punjab's Jalandhar.
- Nijjar was shot dead outside a gurdwara in Surrey.

• Issue raised on the sidelines of G20 Summit

- On the sidelines the [G20 Summit](#) in Delhi, Canadian PM and PM Modi had discussed Khalistani extremism.
- Canadian PM also raised the issue of foreign interference in this murder and asked India for cooperation in the investigation.
- On the other hand, during the meeting, PM Modi had expressed his deep concerns to Canadian PM about the ongoing anti-India activities being carried out by extremist elements in Canada.

• Recent anti-India activities in Canada

- A massive controversy had erupted, in June 2023, over a social media video of a parade float in Canada depicting late PM Indira Gandhi's assassination.
 - A female figure was shown in a blood-stained white saree, with the hands up, as turbaned men pointed guns at her.
 - The parade seemed to celebrate the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
 - The parade was allegedly organised by pro-Khalistani supporters days before the 39th anniversary of 'Operation Bluestar' (celebrated on June 6).
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Q1) What is Operation Blue Star?

Operation Blue Star refers to a military operation conducted by the Indian government in June 1984 to remove Sikh militants who had taken shelter in the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, Punjab, India. The operation was a response to the escalating violence and separatist activities led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who sought to establish an independent Sikh state called Khalistan.

Q2) What is the geographical location of Canada?

Canada is located in North America, specifically in the northern part of the continent. It spans a vast area, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. Canada shares land borders with the United States to the south and maritime boundaries with France (overseas territories) and Denmark (Greenland) to the east.

Source: [Canada investigates Indian government link to killing of Khalistani activist, expels Indian diplomat](#) | [Hindustan Times](#) | [Times of India](#) | [India Today](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/khalistan-movement/>

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