AGRARIAN DISPARITIES AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN PUNJAB SINCE INDEPENDENCE (A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS)

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JOTINDER SEKHON

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067, INDIA
1982

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW MEHRAULI ROAD
NEW DELHI-110067

C E R T I F I C A T E

This dissertation entitled "Agrarian Disparities and Political Mobilization in Punjab Since Independence (A Sociological Analysis)" by Jotinder Sekhon for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation should be placed before the examiners for their consideration.

(YOGENDRA SINGH)
CHAIRMAN

(T.K. OOMMEN)
SUPERVISOR

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P R E F A C E

With the vast majority of the population in the former colonial developing countries residing in the rural areas, it is not surprising that social scientists have focussed a considerable amount of research on the problems of the predominantly agrarian economy of these societies. It is to this agrarian problem that we shall turn our attention to - a problem that has been studied from a variety of perspectives but without any agreement as to a general theory for the understanding of the nature of the agrarian social structure and the changes taking place over time in the structure of relations between the various sections of the rural population.

In this dissertation we will turn our attention to issues in agrarian relations with specific reference to the state of Punjab. Punjab is in the forefront of the so-called "Green Revolution" in India, and is widely acknowledged to be the state which has experienced the greatest amount of capitalist agricultural development. Punjab is a particularly suitable state for a study such as ours in view of the fears expressed as to the socio-political consequences of the "Green Revolution". It provides a fit case for the analysis of the relationship between agricultural modernization and political mobilization of the peasantry.

The objective is to arrive at an understanding of the relations between groups and categories of people who derive their livelihood from the soil, and the relationship of these groups and categories with the land, either as owners or as workers on the land, or as both. An effort is sought to be made to explain the changes in these relationships consequent upon the interaction between externally induced factors of change in the form of land reforms and technological inputs and the already existing social, economic and political factors and the implications of these changes. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of understanding historical forces in order to explain changes in the contemporary era. In this context too Punjab provides a fitting example.

In the introductory chapter we will outline some of the theoretical issues which have been debated in attempts to understand and explain changes in the agrarian social structure. Thereafter, we will briefly summarize the changes that have been induced in the Indian rural milieu ever since the country emerged from colonial rule. Implicit in the account will be our approach to an understanding of these issues as they pertain to Punjab. We will then put forth some propositions about the state which will be exemplified and analyzed in the course of the dissertation.

In chapter II we will present an historical analysis of the agrarian structure of Punjab before India attained her Independence in 1947. We will in particular concentrate on the period of colonial domination which immediately preceded Independence and also had the greatest impact on production relations in rural Punjab. In chapter III an attempt will be made to present and analyze changes that have taken place in the agrarian economy since Independence and the implications of these changes. In chapter IV we will analyze trends and implications in terms of political mobilization of the peasantry. In chapter V we will summarize our argument and present the conclusions we have arrived at on the basis of our analysis.

We do not claim to make any original contribution to the vast body of theoretical and empirical literature on the subject. We only wish to highlight certain issues which need to be kept in perspective when trying to understand changes at the micro level. All too often analysts at the micro level fail to take into account historical and other macro-level theoretical concerns. Macro level analysts are also very often guilty of neglecting insights provided by micro-level studies. In spite of a rise in opinion favouring inter-disciplinary

research, most studies of the agrarian structure in India tend either to make sweeping generalizations at the all-India level or concentrate on micro-level village studies. Very few studies have been conducted at the state and district levels. Our study is an attempt to bridge the gap by analyzing change at the intermediate level - the state - while at the same time providing insights from the macro and micro perspectives.

Our analysis is based almost entirely on the perusal of mainly published, and sometimes unpublished, secondary source material. No field work was carried out. It is our contention that field work must follow an understanding of the larger theoretical and substantive issues and in this thesis an attempt to this end has been made. However, some observations have been made on the basis of talks with some farmers of a village in Ludhiana district and some researchers at the Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana. General observations of the Punjab countryside were also kept in mind when analyzing our material.

Chapter-I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The key element in agrarian relations is land and different sections of the population are differentiated in terms of their relationship to the land and its resources, and the production, distribution and consumption structure that emanates therefrom. This differentiation is based on the technological and social arrangements,[1] and while the technological elements influence the nature of the work, the social organization determines the manner in which work is allocated between different members of the community. And further, the allocation of work depends on the institutional framework, and in an agrarian setting the basic institutions evolve around the ownership and control over land and other material resources.

The relationship between groups and categories of people in the agrarian economy is governed by the economic system and its rationality.[2] The technological system of production is subjected to certain 'constraints' by the

1. Andre Beteille, Inequality and Social Change, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1972, p.8.

2. It is often argued that an industrial economy is more dominated by rational and economic factors than the agrarian economy. We feel that in an agrarian economy too considerations of rationality and economic elements coexist with social and political factors and play an important role in determining the nature of the economy. also see,
Maurice Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics, NLB, London, 1972.

natural and social milieu. These 'constraints' limit and determine the possibilities of a system and its effectiveness. In order to understand the economic system we must first study the social relations of production. A system may over time develop certain contradictions which are not conducive to the maintenance of the essential structures of the system. The system must then evolve towards a new structure. However, a system is not necessarily completely altered by the intervention of a new element, but it gives the system a certain dynamism and a society may apply certain control mechanisms to tide over such consequences as are considered undesireable for the maintenance of the system. Change ultimately depends on the functional compatibility and incompatibility of the social structures of a system and the analysis of economic rationality requires us to analyze the basis of the structures of social life which are a result of men's conscious and unconscious actions.

In recent years attention has been focussed on the changing peasantry in the developing countries. Some scholars see the process of change as one in which there emerges a tension between the 'inward-oriented' or traditional forces and the 'outward-oriented' forces who wish to forge ties with outside centres of economic and

social power.[3] The outward-oriented forces finally triumph as a series of economic crises arise owing to the influence of outside factors on village life. These economic crises hit differentially at various sections within the village and once the old institutions have weakened sufficiently, the outward-oriented forces are allowed to triumph. The response to the new opportunities presented by the outside factors depends on the economic position of different groups within the village. Those with economic and political power are better able to exploit the new opportunities.

However, there are also other important social and political factors which reflect the changing attitudes of the village folk toward each other, toward local leadership, and toward the outside society which surrounds them.[4] The changes set in motion by the modernizing forces are structural and can be in response to the introduction of a new factor in the environment which creates new roles and opportunities, or by a group of people introducing farming or commercial innovations through new techniques and market conditions, or through government stimulation leading to the creation of new institutions.

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3. Joel Migdal, Peasants, Politics and Revolution, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, pp.3-29.

4. Guy Hunter, Modernizing Peasant Societies, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, pp.25-52.

A major stimulus to change in developing countries has been state-initiated. Some of the measures affecting the agrarian structure are agrarian reform and state-sponsored technological innovation for greater productivity. These two factors of change have come to assume contradictory properties in recent decades. While agrarian reforms in general, and land reforms in particular, are widely accepted as promoting equity in the social relations of production, technological innovation for growth in productivity is seen to perpetuate the already existing structures of inequality if it takes place in the absence of land reforms.

Land reform is often taken to be a tool for the creation of "an appropriate institutional environment"[5] for further economic development. It involves changing the land tenure system and the relations that emanate therefrom. Land reform, in restructuring these relationships, has implications for the political, social and economic position of groups within a society.

Further, land reform is defined as an attempt "to transform the agrarian structure by altering the distribution of land and the terms upon which land is held and

5. Peter Dorner, Land Reform and Economic Development, Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1972, p.13.

worked."[6] Basically an equalizing factor, it is seen as a necessary though not a sufficient condition for further development. Moreover, it is felt adequate changes in the agrarian structure and institutions can help integrate advanced technology into the general pattern of development and create the psychological preconditions for the adoption of technological innovations.[7]

Technological innovation as an agent of change must also be seen as a social process which stimulates structural changes in society. Technology has been defined as "a set of social and physical relationships, or modes of interaction, between man and the mechanisms with which he works," and further, that it is a process that contains within it the seeds of its own growth independently of the superficial social and economic factors.[8]

In the modern era, however, technology has come to be inextricably related to the various forms of human and physical capital employed in the production process.

6. T.J. Byres, "Land Reform, Industrialization and Marketed Surplus in India," in David Lehmann (ed.), Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Reformism, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1974, p.223.

7. Guy Hunter, op.cit., p.68.

8. Stanley A. Hetzler, Technological Growth and Social Change, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969, pp. 293-94.

And the techniques of production are in turn related in terms of a particular combination of inputs. In the agrarian context, the two basic inputs are labour and capital and technological changes are associated with changes in the relationship between these two inputs.[9] Technological change can also be explained in terms of the incorporation of a new resource into the production process as a partial substitute for some resource in current usage.[10] Very often, the falling purchase price of one input, e.g., capital, will reduce the demand for its substitute-labour. This question is of particular relevance to us in our analysis of the agrarian structure in Punjab.

A question that has been most hotly debated is that of the desirable size of farm which allows for a perfect fit between labour-intensive and capital-intensive farming. This factor is particularly relevant for the densely populated developing countries with a low level of industrial growth and a large surplus of rural labour.[11] Here we come face to face with the contradiction between arguments for equity and social justice on the one hand, and productivity and technological growth on the other.

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9. Montague Yudelman, et.al., Technological Change in Agriculture and Employment in Developing Countries, OECD, Paris, 1971, pp.36-46.

10. D.P. Chaudhri, "New Technologies and Income Distribution in Agriculture," in David Lehmann (ed.), op.cit., pp. 157-89.

11. Some of the issues raised here have been analysed by Guy Hunter, op.cit., among others.

There are those who argue in favour of large scale farming on the grounds that a large farm permits the most efficient use of capital inputs for greater productivity. And further, that larger farmers are more receptive to innovative technology and more 'progressive' in outlook. However, there are others who are critical of this policy for they feel that the so-called 'progressive' farmers are enterprising only because they are economically and socially privileged and in a better position to avail of the new opportunities that come their way.[12] Land and capital are cheap relative to labour and the big landlords tend to adopt technologies of production which are characterized by high land-labour and capital-labour ratios. This makes for different methods of cultivation and different yield levels. However, many studies prove that productivity per acre is more on small, intensively cultivated holdings than on large mechanized ones. And in countries with surplus labour force, it is more important to increase productivity per acre than productivity per man. The introduction of capital-intensive agriculture in larger holdings with less labour will lead to large scale unemployment and under-employment. It is possible that in the short

12. Keith Griffin, The Political Economy of Agrarian Change, The MacMillan Press Ltd., London, 1979 (2nd edition).

run the demand for labour could rise owing to greater intensity, but the long term effect will be labour-displacement.[13]

The unequal production relations will continue to be perpetuated unless accompanied by reform measures designed to change thse relations. All structural changes sought to be brought about have an impact on the economic and social position of the various groups and categories and they bring into focus the question of the interests of each category vis-a-vis the other and this has profound political implications. Each interest group will endeavour to safeguard its own interests through political moves. However, political action is instigated not only as a response to externally induced changes. Political forces may initiate or stimulate structural change or political action may follow as a consequence of structural changes already set in motion. The two questions relevant to our study of agrarian relations concern factors that stimulate peasant political participation, and the group that show the greatest amount of receptivity to political processes. We will briefly present some theoretical observations on peasant politics.

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13. Clive Bell, "Ideology and Economic Interests in Indian Land Reform," in David Lehmann (ed.), op.cit., p.206.

Interest in the study of peasant politics arose out of the enquiries of Marxist scholars who attempted to find out if the peasantry presented features conducive to action in the interests of the peasantry as a class.[14] Shanin concludes that while showing certain class-like features and acting at times as a 'class-like social entity,' the potential political impact of the peasantry is undermined by their fragmentation into small local segments and the diversity and vagueness of their political aims. It is only during certain crisis situations that their class-like characteristics come into prominence. Very rarely will the peasantry undertake independent political action and may at best be organised for action by an external uniting force or undertake spontaneous and amorphous political action. It may at times act as a check on government policy and stimulate change.

Hamza Alavi,[15] however, gives prime importance to the factional mode of politics which is operative at the local level for this allows identification of the actual alignments, the structural factors which underly them,

14. Teodor Shanin, "Peasantry as a Political Factor," in T. Shanin (ed.), Peasants and Peasant Societies, Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1971, pp.238-63.

15. Hamza Alavi, "Peasant Classes and Primordial Loyalties," in Journal of Peasant Societies, Vol.I, No.1, October 1973, pp.23-62.

and the changes consequent upon the emergence of structural contradictions. This framework, he argues, enables us to identify the power relationships and see how the power of individual landowners is articulated into the power of a class. What is important is to define conditions which produce vertical cleavages and those in which these yield to new patterns of political conflict characterized by horizontal cleavages and class solidarity of poor peasants. The ties that bind various groups affect different needs, motives and values. A stress on factional politics does not negate class factors, but these ties mediate the complex processes through which class relations are crystallized. This factor is relevant to our study of the Punjab.

Given the fact of internal differentiation and political weakness of the peasantry, we must next determine which group leads peasant political action. Here we find that no generalization is possible as scholars have differed depending on the different experiences in different regions.

Eric Wolf[16] and Joel Migdal[17] are of the opinion that poor peasants and landless labourers are too poor

16. Eric Wolf, "On Peasant Rebellions," in Teodor Shanin (ed.), op.cit., pp.264-74.

17. Joel Migdal, op.cit.

and dependent on the landlord for livelihood and have no tactical power or resources of their own for action. They have thus to rely on an external power to challenge the power which constrains them. It is the landowning middle peasantry or the peasantry located in a peripheral area outside the domain of landlord control which is in a position to rebel. It is this section which is vulnerable to economic changes consequent upon commercialism in a situation where social relations remain encased within traditional bounds.

Hamza Alavi,[18] however, concludes that initially it is the middle peasantry which is politically active in building up anti-rich peasant sentiment. They are thus able to raise the morale of the poor peasants and stimulate them to action. Thus, potentially, the poor peasant class is the most revolutionary class, but, as has already been noted, there are specific power relationships that operate through factions which are a major impediment to class mobilization.

Pouchepadass,[19] however, feels that the middle peasantry is too ambiguous and heterogenous a category to

18. Hamza Alavi, "Peasants and Revolution," in Kathleen Gough and Hari P. Sharma (eds.), Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1973, pp.291-337.

19. Jacques Pouchepadass, "Peasant Classes in Twentieth Century Agrarian Movements in India," in E.J. Hobsbawm, et.al. (eds.), Peasants in History, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1980, pp.136-55.

play an active initial role. This category tends to identify itself with either the rich peasantry or the poor peasantry and under the influence of capitalism there is a tendency towards polarization which further adds to the instability of this class.

The issues raised above are particularly relevant in the context of India's agrarian development and indeed for our analysis of the situation in Punjab. Externally stimulated changes act upon a complex traditional social structure and system of values. We must, therefore, outline the salient features of the traditional Indian village society and the relations between groups and categories in that setting.

In the past, a typical Indian village was characterized by a system of "multiple gradations"[20] in which families and persons were related through a variety of vertical ties. Hierarchical values were generally accepted by the members. Social relations centred around land and its produce and each group had a different role in the production process either as an owner of land or as a manual worker on it. Vertical ties were expressed

20. Andre Beteille, "The Indian Village: Past and Present," in E.J. Hobsbawm, et.al. (eds.), op.cit., pp.107-120.

through the 'formal and elaborate' pattern Jajmani relations based on a system of interdependence between castes and through 'informal and variable' relations between patrons and clients such as those between landlord and tenant, and master and servant. Hierarchical values legitimized these unequal relations. The fundamental aspect of agrarian relations between different sections of the rural population as embedded in the Jajmani system was that between landowners and agricultural labourers.[21] Some earlier theorists of the Jajmani system did not regard agricultural labour as part of the system.[22] Jajmani ties were taken to be confined to the relationship between landowners on one side, and sewing and artisan castes on the other. Others restricted Jajmani ties to the religious sphere only.[23]

Jan Breman, however, advocates an interpretation of the Jajmani system as a network of social exchange among members of the various castes which had religious, economic, as well as political facets.[24] Further, the

21. Jan Breman, Patronage and Exploitation, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974.

22. E.B. Harper, "Two Systems of Economic Exchange in Village India," American Anthropologist, Vol.61, No.5, October 1959; and
B.S. Cohn, "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste," in McKim Marriott (ed.), Village India, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955.

23. David Pocock, "Notes on Jajmani Relationships," in contributions to Indian Sociology, No.6, 1962, pp.78-95.

24. Jan Breman, op.cit., pp.10-16.

relationship was one of exploitation with an element of paternalism and patronage in it. The system was a mechanism both for the distribution of goods and exchange of labour as well as for the allocation of power and prestige.

These relationships have, however, undergone changes through interaction with outside forces. Beteille[25] differentiates the categories engaged in the production process in terms of 'ownership, control and use of land and other material resources'. The three main patterns of productive organisation are based on family labour, hired labour, and tenancy. These three farms are arranged in a variety of ways and are crystallized in the form of landlords, owner-cultivators, tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers.

Thorner has identified three major groups.[26] These are the Malik or proprietor deriving his income mainly from property rights in the soil; the Kisan or working peasants living mainly by toiling on their plot of land - and they may be small owners or tenants; and Mazdoor or labourers living mainly by working on other

25. Andre Beteille, op.cit., pp.19-21.

26. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1976 (2nd edition), pp.9-10.

people's land. This division is based on the amount of actual labour contributed to the production process and the share in the product. The most important of all these relationships is that between the employer and employee of which there are a number of variations in different parts of the country.[27]

As part of its general strategy of economic development, the Indian Government undertook to enact a large number of land reform legislations with the avowed intention of rectifying unequal production relations and to create conditions conducive to rapid economic growth. The laws enacted related to the acquisition of large estates and abolition of intermediaries, the imposition of a ceiling on landholdings, and the regulation of tenancy. Though there was success in reducing estates of very large sizes and many non-cultivating landowners took over land for self-cultivation, the land ceiling regulations were by and large circumvented. Tenancy regulations aimed at giving security to tenants only led to large scale eviction of tenants through take over of land for self-cultivation. Only in some areas where tenants were able to establish their rights has their position improved.[28]

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27. Daniel and Alice Thorner, "Employer-Labourer Relationships in Agriculture," in Daniel and Alice Thorner, Land and Labour in India, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, pp.21-39.

28. The success or failure of early land reform measures in the various states is surveyed by Daniel Thorner in The Agrarian Prospect in India.

Thus, while tardy implementation of land reform laws failed to redistribute productive resources equitably, continuing food shortages prompted the government to lay greater stress on technological inputs to bring about an increase in food production. Technological growth was encouraged without making any sincere efforts to alter the unequal land relations. The new agricultural strategy for growth emerged as a major stimulant to change in the structure of agrarian relations. The new 'package' of inputs, consisting of 'miracle' seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and mechanization, required the adoption of new agricultural practices in the form of a new crop calendar, multiple cropping, and a shorter maturing period. But more important than that, the successful implementation of the strategy required a large amount of working capital at hand and only those categories of farmers with material resources or easy access to sources of credit were in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities. Besides the fact that only the rich and the powerful could make use of the strategy, it was selectively applied only to those areas with already existing favourable infrastructural and institutional facilities. Thus while the strategy created conditions for the increase in structural inequalities among groups and categories within regions, it also

contributed to the widening of disparities between different regions.

A number of studies have confirmed the trend towards increasing structural inequalities. Byres,[29] on reviewing some of the literature on the early years of the 'Green Revolution', came to the conclusion that the new strategy is marked by a higher rate of capital formation, greater tendency towards labour-displacing mechanization, and a new relationship with agricultural labour. There is evidence of an increasing shift from customary relations between cultivators and jajmans to hired labour on cash payment. A new relationships is seen to be emerging between rich peasants and capitalist farmers on the one hand, and landless labourers and sharecroppers on the other. Studies in the latter half of the seventies have only reinforced the view that the new strategy of growth has been encouraged at the expense of equality and social justice.[30]

The emerging trend in land relations have stimulated a lively debate on the mode of production in

29. T.J. Byres, "The Dialectic of India's Green Revolution," in South Asian Review, Vol.5, No.2, January 1972, pp.99-116.

30. Keith Griffin, op.cit.;
Biplab Das Gupta, The New Agrarian Technology and India, MacMillan, Madras, 1980; and
Ashok Rudra, "Organisation of Agriculture for Rural Development: The Indian Case," in D. Ghai et.al (eds.), Agrarian Systems and Rural Development, MacMillan, London, 1979, pp.72-112.

Indian agriculture.[31] The issue of transition from feudalism to capitalism is now being considered afresh in the light of the Indian experience. Rudra[32] differentiates the dual tendency towards feudalism and capitalism which operates in different combinations in big landowners, and states that a mixed mode of production operates in Indian agriculture. While being capitalist in terms of expanded production with generation and re-investment of surplus this large farmer class continues to remain feudal in terms of labour employment.

Along with the acknowledgement of the fact that there was an increase in inequality, there emerged the view that the increasing polarization of classes would lead to tension between the rich and the poor. The deprived sections of the peasantry, it was felt, would rise up in revolt in the face of growing differentiation and the ensuing tension would lead to the crystallization of class conflict with momentous political implications.[32]

31. The debate can be followed through the pages of the Economic and Political Weekly and the major viewpoints have recently been reprinted in Studies in the Development of Capitalism in India, Vanguard Books Limited, Lahore, 1978.

32. Ashok Rudra, op.cit.

33. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Green Revolution in Punjab - A Field Trip," Economic and Political Weekly, June 28, 1969;
Francine R. Frankel, India's Green Revolution: Economic Gains and Political Costs, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1971;
Kathleen Gough, "Imperialism and Revolutionary Potential in South Asia," in Gough and Sharma (eds.), op.cit., pp.3-42.

However, this causal explanation of agrarian tension and political action consequent upon growing economic disparities is too simplistic an explanation of change and peasant political activity. Peasant political mobilization is a much more complex process and there is no direct relationship between inequality and social conflict.[34] What affects relations between groups are the difference in conditions of existence including differences in lifestyles and productive roles, the awareness or consciousness of these differences by the groups themselves, and the organization of this consciousness by political parties or movements for purposes of political action. These three factors combine in various ways to influence the nature and form of conflict. Furthermore, consciousness can emerge spontaneously from below following awareness among people of their similar material conditions or can be shaped from above by leaders of a political movement or party.

Oommen[35] too refutes the single causation theory and has identified five factors which combine in various

34. Andre Beteille, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 188-93.

35. T.K. Oommen, "Green Revolution and Agrarian Conflict," in Economic and Political Weekly, June 1971, pp. A99-A103.

ways to contribute to agrarian tension. These are - a perception of income disparities by the rural poor, a viable numerical strength of the agricultural labour force and consciousness of their political bargaining power, adequate support by political parties, rising aspirations of the rural population, and the increasing lack of fit between the socio-political order and the economic order.

But whatever the factors that make for political mobilization, it is generally acknowledged that tension between the rich and the poor is on the increase though this does not necessarily lead to enhanced political activity. The already existing inequalities have been further accentuated owing to the concentration of the fruits of development in the hands of a few. But the crucial factor is that there is now greater awareness among the depressed classes as to their disadvantaged position and the relevant question is as to how and why mobilization takes place. There is also an increasing call from various quarters, including government, for mobilization of the peasantry and their greater participation in the developmental efforts.

In a recent comprehensive study Francine R. Frankel[36] has analyzed India's development process

36. Francine R. Frankel, India's Political Economy, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978.

since Independence. A note has been made of the contradictions inherent in advocating and introducing growth strategies leading to growing economic disparities and at the same time introducing schemes like technical training to unemployed youth and providing employment and aid to small and marginal farmers and landless labourers, for the government has not been able to reconcile growth strategies with equity considerations. Instead there has been constant fluctuation from one to the other. Like many other analysts, she arrives at the conclusion that the only solution short of a Communist revolution to India's developmental problems lies in adopting radical agrarian reform, better organisation of the cooperative pattern of economic development and the creation of additional employment opportunities for the landless and small and marginal farmers. Further, there is a call for greater political participation by the peasantry in classbased organizations. This is necessary if the poor are to participate in the development process and apply effective pressure for implementation of social reform for their advantage. So far, however, political pressure from below has not been successful in carrying out implementation of social reform mainly because of vertical political ties based on caste, kinship and factional alliances that continue

to dominate. Internal cleavages prevent the effective formation of alliances on class lines based on interests of the categories. The only solution appears to be organization from without - and this has so far not been very successful in India.

Our purpose in this thesis is to highlight some of the issues raised above as they operate in the state of Punjab. We will demonstrate that relations of production as they develop historically over time have an important bearing on the nature and trend in the agrarian relations in the present era. The regional differentiation of the peasantry as also the differentiation among different sections of the peasantry which emerged during colonial rule continues to be operative in the post-Independence period. We will attempt to show that new strategies of change introduced after Independence have largely served to further reinforce the already existing social relations and perpetuate the already existing structures of inequality. In the face of forces of continuity, however, we will also analyse the forces of change and demonstrate the emergence of new forms of inequalities. A major point we wish to make is that political mobilization and protest movements are not directly stimulated by the increasing inequalities.

Various forms of traditional political alliances in terms of factions, caste, class and religion continue to influence the nature of peasant political action through interaction with the new forces of change. In this thesis we will analyse and substantiate the propositions we have raised above with regard to one state in India - Punjab.

Chapter-II

THE PUNJAB IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter we will highlight certain features of the agrarian structure in the Punjab prior to 1947. We will focus particularly on the indigenous, historical forces which provide an element of continuity in the face of external forces of change. It is this interaction between forces of continuity and forces of change, between indigenous and exogenous forces which determines the nature and direction of change.

Production relations in an agrarian economy centre around the system of landholding which in traditional India was marked by its complexity.[1] The system was further complicated by the interlocking of the land tenure and tax collection structure. During the Mughal period[2] there existed various types of landed interests with an elaborate zamindari system forming a pyramidical structure in agrarian relations. There were three broad categories of zamindars - the autonomous chieftains, the

1. Eric Stokes, The Peasant and the Raj, Vikas Publishing House Private Limited, New Delhi, 1978, p. 1 f.

2. S.Nurul Hassan, "Zamindars Under the Mughals," in R.E. Fykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 17-32.

intermediary zamindars and the primary zamindars - each with various kinds of rights which were super-imposed upon each other. The burden of the shares of the zamindars and the imperial revenue demand fell on the cultivator who lived under extremely strained circumstances.

In the Punjab[3] too Mughal officials were linked to the cultivators in the villages through the zamindars who functioned in various ways. In the Jullunder Doab, for instance, lineages of Muslim Rajputs held the position of zamindars over extensive tracts containing a large number of villages inhabited by other caste and religious groups. In their own and nearby villages, all over the Punjab, zamindars participated directly in the supervision of agriculture and village life in general. In areas further away from their own villages, the zamindars functioned as revenue collecting intermediaries between the state and the other caste groups who controlled cultivation.

At the close of Mughal rule, Punjab was governed by a confederation of warring Sikh misls and then at the start of the 19th century passed on to a few decades of peace and stability under Ranjit Singh. At the

3. Tom Kessinger, Vilyatpur, Young Asia Publications, New Delhi, 1979, pp.19-31.

organisational and functional level, however, the official part of the Sikh revenue and land tenure system was like that of the Mughals.

Land tenures were broadly classified into three categories:[4] there were the taluqdars, a category of zamindars between the Vassal Chiefs and the peasant proprietors; the peasant proprietors; and the tenants. It has, however, been noted that the Sikh rulers encouraged the actual cultivators as against the holders of superior ownership. The Taluqdars were gradually stripped of their rights and the actual cultivators assumed proprietory rights in due course. The bulk of the land was held by small proprietors. Sale and mortgage of land was not entirely unknown. The tenants numbered half the number of cultivators and cultivated only a quarter of the total area under cultivation. There were also labourers and artisans who assisted the cultivators directly or indirectly and were generally regarded as inferior to the cultivators by caste.

Under both Mughal and Sikh rule, the structural position of the village remained unchanged.[5] But along with structural continuity there was also structural change at

4. Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1978, pp.168 f.

5. Kessinger, op.cit., pp.32-36.

the level of the zamindars. In the Doab the Jats replaced the Rajputs as the main revenue payers. This was more than mere substitution of one family, lineage, caste or religious group by another; it heralded the elimination of the zamindar. This constituted a fundamental change in the structure of rural society in Punjab. Though a considerable amount of land was cultivated by tenants and there were some large holdings, control of large estates by single families or groups remained a feature only in the native states of the princes. But structural change was limited to the extent that substantial tracts were granted as jagirs by Ranjit Singh to officials and favourites and final elimination of the system had to await British annexation and new revenue policies and procedures.[6]

The agrarian system was further complicated by the British on annexation in 1849 when they attempted to establish an administrative system based on their own perceptions of private property in land, efficient system of administration, and the attendant legal apparatus.[7] They also believed that in India the Mughal Emperor is

6. This view has been challenged recently by Mridula Mukherjee, "Some Aspects of Agrarian Structure of Punjab, 1925-47," Economic and Political Weekly, June 28, 1980, pp. A46 to A58.

7. Auslee T. Embree, "Landholding in India and British Institutions," in R.E. Frykenberg,(ed.), op.cit., pp. 33-52.

the proprietor of all the land in his Empire and that the despotic political rule did not permit freedom of initiative to the individual.[8] This view was ultimately based on the actual nature of Indian society where the idea of group possession was deeply rooted and there was an absence of absolute private ownership. The British did not, however, challenge the existence of a separate and distinct customary right of physical dominion. But they attempted to weld the property attached to the revenue collecting right to the already existing primary right of dominion. But this revenue collecting right was rendered saleable for default, and even where the two rights were lodged correspondingly, the two could not be kept together under all circumstances. Thus the pattern of proprietory rights became little more than an index of revenue payers and steadily came to bear little relationship to the actual distribution of operational holdings. The legal description of society failed to fit the economic and the sociological, and moreover, rural society could not be neatly segregated into mutually exclusive roles of landlord, tenant, and labourer. This had implications for the response of the rural society to colonial rule. Though a

8. Eric Stokes, op.cit., pp.3-18.

Though a strong sense of rights in land prevailed, the actual occupation of the land needed the constant support of some extra-legal power, i.e., groups that wielded local political influence most effectively, such as the local caste group or the faction. But here too the response is complicated by an interplay of interests expressed variously in terms of land control rights, caste, territorial and political affiliations.

During the first decade after annexation, the British followed a paternalistic policy characterized by a desire to maintain Punjabi customs and indigenous institutions. Revenue and property settlements were made in favour of the peasant cultivator in the belief that the peasant provides a suitable base for peaceful British rule.[9] Though a number of new landowners were created by the time of the first settlement in 1855 mainly by awarding rights to tenants who could prove that they had cultivated the land for 20 years or more, a commitment to the defence of the village community was maintained.

But the Oudh uprising of 1857 undermined the faith of the British policy makers on the peasantry who still stuck to the traditional relations and rallied behind the Taluqdars against the British.[10] Thereafter, the British

9. T.R. Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1965.

10. Ibid., pp. 134-173.

adopted a policy of conciliation toward the Taluqdars and this policy was extended to the zamindars of Bengal and the Sirdars of Punjab.

Further interest in the structure of rural society was generated through tenancy legislations since the landlord policy had an adverse impact on the condition of the peasantry.[11] Through the Punjab Rent Act of 1868 all tenants hitherto recorded as possessing rights of occupancy were legally awarded such rights until the contrary was proved by the landlord in a regular suit in court.[12]

A fundamental change in the agrarian structure in Punjab during the latter half of the 19th century took place in the form of increased sale and transfer of land and indebtedness.[13] Before annexation transfer was limited to within the community and bound by customary rights of pre-emption or communal ownership. Further, there was only a limited market for the produce and little surplus for accumulation with the result that land was of little value to the moneylending classes. The advent of British rule removed many of these checks mainly through

11. Ibid., pp.175-180.

12. Ibid., pp.197-204.

13. A detailed analysis is available in P.H.M. Van den Dungen, The Punjab Tradition, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1972.

the introduction of an elaborate legal apparatus to handle land cases. This factor, combined with the process that had already begun since annexation when with rapid agricultural progress there was a rise in value of land and an increasing profit margin from the sale of produce, worked to the benefit of the commercial classes. The revenue demand was fixed over a long period and left scope for a profitable surplus over which the moneylender desired to have a hold. The civil courts enforced contract law rigorously which made man's entire property liable for the satisfaction of his debts.

The shape that land transfer and indebtedness took in Punjab was determined by variations of the Punjab social structure and the regional socio-economic differentiation.

There were three distinct religious groups in Punjab during the colonial period. According to the 1881 Census, Muslims constituted 52.4 per cent of the total population of undivided Punjab, Hindus 38.2 per cent and the Sikhs 6 per cent. Muslims predominated in the Western districts constituting 90 per cent of the total population in the hills and 82 per cent in the plains. Hindus formed an overwhelming majority in the Eastern districts with 94 per cent of the total population in the hilly

areas and 69 per cent in the plains. In the central and submontane areas there was a mixture of all three religious groups with the Hindus forming 37 per cent, Muslims 50 per cent and Sikhs 12 per cent of the total population.[14]

Further, there were various landholding tribes and castes differentiated by distinctions in social status, such as Jats and Rajputs. In addition, there were three major Hindu trading castes, the Banias, Khatris and Aroras. Hereditary status and occupational concerns of the various sections also shaped the impact of the novel forces set in motion by the British.[15] In rural Punjab there was a particular status to be derived from landholding. Certain lower castes tried to raise their status through attempts to occupy land. But for the hereditary landowning tribes and castes the major preoccupation was a desire to maintain their status as landholders. Increased sale of land posed a great threat to the status of the landholding tribes. The response of the native rural population was influenced

14. N.G. Barrier, Punjab Politics and the Disturbances of 1907, Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Department of History, Duke University, 1965 (Microfilm available at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi), p.2.

15. This section is based on P.H.M. Van den Dungen, "Change in Status and Occupation in 19th Century Punjab," in D.A. Low (ed.), Soundings in Modern South Asian History, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968, pp.59-94.

by the indigenous social forces within the various communities. Economic motives seem to be somewhat important in accounting for occupational changes. In the face of penetration of market forces, men from some skilful and enterprising cultivating castes became soldiers in increasing numbers and also took to money lending and trading as supplementary occupations. This also took care in some measure of the surplus manpower generated through population growth. However, these changes were most striking among the Sikh Jats of Central Punjab and this has been attributed to their greater economy enterprise. The Jat Sikhs, who had gained economic and political power under Ranjit Singh, were able to maintain this power aided by the fact that they laid no claim to Kshatriya status as did the Rajputs, who suffered in consequence. When it came to the question of loss of land, tribes and castes claiming high status, such as the Rajputs, lost more land to outsiders since a high status required a certain degree of withdrawal from physical work to maintain the high status.

Khatris, Aroras and Banias profitted directly from the general stimulation of trade under the British. The scope for moneylending increased tremendously. The Aroras in the south-west were also able to add to

whatever land they had acquired as grants before British rule through lending money and grain to the Muslim land-holders who more often than not had to pay off debts through land transfer. In the south-east of the Province, however, where agriculture was more insecure, agricultural credit tended to be restricted, the value of land remained limited, and alienations of land were less extensive than in other parts of Punjab.

These variations in the social and economic structure of Punjab had an influence on the nature and extent of land transfers and on the consequences of these alienations. From the sociological point of view these transfers are an important development in the process of evolution of Punjabi Society as a whole, occuring as they did at a time when commercialism made significant inroads in the region.

In the five year period ending 1877-78 the annual average sale of land was 93,000 acres; by 1882-83 it grew to 1,60,000 acres and averaged 3,10,000 acres annually by 1887-88 and 3,38,000 acres by 1892-93. Land prices also soared around the same time and rose from Rs.10 per acre in 1869-70 to Rs.20 in 1875-76; prices fell slightly to Rs.18 in 1880-81 and Rs.16 in 1885-86, but then rose sharply again to Rs.30 per acre in 1890-91.[16] More

16. H.Calvert, The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab, The Civil and Military Gazette Ltd., Lahore, 1936 (second edition), p.219.

striking, however, was the fact that the professional moneylender was becoming an active agent in these transactions. The moneylender was interested more in the produce than the land and accounted for most of the mortgages and a lesser share of the sales.[17] The area sold was generally less than half of that mortgaged. Another notable feature was that the mortgages took place mainly in prosperous areas and were largely in favour of moneylenders, while the sales were more prevalent in areas of insecure agriculture and were mostly in favour of other agriculturists.[18] The fact that the volume of debt was larger in the more prosperous areas has also been noted by M.L. Darling in this thesis on the Punjab peasant.[19]

The nature and extent of land transfers varied from one district to another.[20] In 1876, of the 60 villages surveyed in Hoshiarpur district, only two were free of debt, and most of the debt was with the professional moneylender. In Amritsar in 1878, 14 per cent of the total area had been alienated by sale and mortgage.

17. Ibid., pp.244-264.

18. The table in Appendix I shows clearly that moneylenders were more prone to mortgaging than purchasing land.

19. M.L. Darling, The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1977.

20. P.H.M. Van den Dungen, op.cit.

In the south-east, where land was mainly held by Hindu Jats, alienations were not extensive and the proportion acquired by moneylenders was very small. The indebtedness that existed was mainly among Hindu and Muslim Rajputs. In Ambala district, however, a large percentage of the acquisition was by professional moneylenders and most of the indebtedness was among the Jats and not the Rajputs. In Western Punjab, the considerable amount of transfer that occurred in Bannu district was in favour of Muslim agriculturists. But in some areas, such as Gujranwala in the north-west, a lot of the land was passing into the hands of Khatri moneylenders. Even in Montgomery and Multan in the south-west, there was a fair amount of transfer. By 1880s in Western Punjab the gulf between the Muslim landholders and Hindu moneylenders was widening with increasing transfers and mortgages in favour of the latter. In the central districts of Ludhiana and Hoshiarpur too moneylenders were acquiring some land.

This increased sale and transfer of land occurred within the general climate of increasing commercialisation aided by the growth in infrastructural facilities. These included the opening up of new lines of communication through the introduction of railways and telegraphic

facilities and growth in the mileage of metalled roads and irrigation canals. A bird's eye view of Punjab's economic development during this period is given in Table-1.

Table-1

Economic Development of Punjab 1872-73 to 1932-33

Year	Mileage			Cultivated area (million acres)	Land Revenue (Lakhs Rupees)
	Railway	Canal	metalled roads		
1872-73	410	2,744	1,036	18.8	201
1882-83	600	4,583	1,467	23.4	206
1892-93	1,725	12,368	2,142	26.7	223
1902-03	-	16,893	-	26.8	230
1912-13	4,000	16,935	2,614	29.0	360
1922-23	4,441	19,664	2,938	30.0	400
1932-33	5,500	19,601	3,904	30.9	428

Source: H.Calvert, The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab, p.107.

These developments stimulated trade and growth in food production.[21] Though in most cases the peasants were in the clutches of moneylenders and had little surplus to sell in the open market, there were areas like Karnal, Chenab and Sidhnai Canal Colony and central districts of

21. Himadri Banerji, "Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Punjab During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in The Punjab Past and Present, Vol.XII, April 1, 1978, pp.221-256.

Ludhiana, Ferozepur and Amritsar where there was a growth in acreage under wheat, sugarcane and cotton for internal consumption and export to other parts of the country and abroad. The opening up of the new opportunities benefited mainly the big landholders as the smaller ones were deeply in debt and moneylenders took away most of their produce. The larger landowners managed to keep the moneylenders at bay, while Jats in Central Punjab benefited mainly due to their industriousness and they also took to trading and moneylending as subsidiary occupations. Thus emerged a new credit group in rural Punjab, which however, carried on its operation through the traditional village Sahukars and consequently strengthened their own position in rural society. This group, as we shall see, was also strengthened through British attempts to curb land alienations outside the traditional landholding classes.

The British in India depended for support on the traditional landholding classes, particularly the Jats, and this group also provided a large percentage of soldiers in the British Army ever since the Revolt of 1857 when Punjabi soldiers had remained loyal to the British. The Punjab peasantry had, therefore, to be kept appeased and the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill was passed in 1900 in order to restrict sale and mortgage of

land to the mainly Hindu trading and moneylending classes. This formed a legislative attempt to remedy a situation which the British themselves had helped perpetuate. It was an interference in the structure of agrarian relations in Punjab which had profound political, social and economic implications.[22]

The passing of the Bill did not strike at the root of poverty and indebtedness. While there was a definite control over sale of land to traditional moneylending castes, sale of land to other agriculturists continued. It was the larger landowning families who were able to amass more land and capital. The Bill led to the creation of a new moneylending class among agriculturists who loaned on harsh terms. Debt increased from Rs.90 crores in 1920 to Rs.135 crores in 1929. The government did not come to terms with the complicated circumstances that led to the impoverishment of the cultivators; it only sought to deal with the moneylender as a symptom of the economic ills of the Province.[23]

The passing of the Bill was a significant factor in ushering in a period of political unrest relating to the structure of rural society in Punjab.[24] These

22. N.G. Barrier, The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900, Duke University Monograph, 1966.

23. Ibid.

24. N.G. Barrier, The Punjab Politics and Disturbances of 1907, has details of the political unrest during this period.

disturbances should, however, be seen within the context of the rising tide of Congress agitation in the Provinces and the attempts of the British to keep the Indians divided on communal lines so as to minimize the threat to British colonial rule. The main issues which caused the disturbances of 1907 were, an amendment to the Land Alienation Act of 1900 with a view to strengthening alienation restrictions, a Bill relating to the Canal Colonies, and a rise in the water rates on the Bari Doab Canal. The agitation in the rural areas was confined mainly to the Chenab Canal Colony and spread to other rural areas where the colonists had relatives. It also spread among former soldiers who had been granted land in the colonies. The opposition to the Land Alienation Act and the amendment to it was confined to the urban areas and was led by Hindu Bania, Khatri and Arora lawyers who felt that the Bill was detrimental to the interests of their caste group. The agitation did not have much impact but it began the process of widening the rift between the rural and urban areas. However, this antagonism did not become prominent till 1921 when the British introduced direct elections and provisions for a new legislative council. The Bill contributed to the formation of the Punjab National Unionist Party in

1923, which was the State's first agrarian political party committed to the cause of rural upliftment and a staunch supporter of the Alienation Bill. This party, however, underplayed the communal element.

Besides stimulating unrest, the Alienation Bill, as we have noted, contributed to the creation of new forms of inequality in rural Punjab. The inequality was clearly reflected in the structure of land distribution and the tenurial pattern. Table 2 below provides some insight for

Table-2

Size and Distribution of Owners' Holdings

Size	% of holdings	Estimated No. of owners	Estimated no. of acres	% of total cultivated area
Under 1 acre	17.9	6,25,400	3,13,000	1.0
1-3 acres	25.5	9,08,400	1,26,800	4.4
3-5 acres	14.9	5,20,000	19,35,000	6.6
5-10 acres	18.0	6,30,600	44,00,000	15.1
10-15 acres	8.2	2,88,300	33,53,000	11.5
15-20 acres	4.3	1,50,100	24,44,000	8.4
20-25 acres	2.7	94,000	19,67,000	6.8
25-50 acres	4.8	1,68,700	58,87,000	20.4
Over 50 acres	3.3	1,20,900	74,52,000	25.7

Source: Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry Report, 1925, quoted in H. Calvert, The Wealth and Welfare of Punjab, p.172.

we find that 76.3 per cent of the total holdings are below 10 acres in size, but they account for only 27.1 per cent

of the total cultivated area. Consequently, 23.7 per cent of the holdings which are above 10 acres account for 72.9 per cent of the total cultivated area.

There was also a large category of tenants which grew in numbers since annexation as did the area under tenant cultivation. In 1918-19 about 51 per cent of the total area under cultivation was by tenants.[25] And in 1927 only 8.2 per cent of the total tenanted area was held by occupancy tenants. The rest was with tenants-at-will. By 1932, occupancy tenants had increased their share to 13 per cent of the total area under tenancy.

However, the total area under tenancy varied from one part of Punjab to another and this was related to differences in the size of holdings according to regions.

Large holdings were mainly concentrated in the western parts of the province where according to one estimate[26] about 40 per cent of the cultivated area was owned by landlords owning more than 50 acres of land. This was also an area of insecure cultivation and one where a larger proportion of land was cultivated by tenants. Nearly all payments were in kind under a system of sharecropping known as batai and almost all the tenants were tenants-at-will.

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25. H. Calvert, op.cit., p.197.

26. M.L. Darling, The Punjab Peasant, pp.98-100.

Tenancy was also prevalent on a large scale in the backward regions of south-eastern Punjab with insecurity of harvest and repeated crop failures. Tenants cultivated about 60 per cent of the land in Hissar and about 50 per cent in Gurgaon.[27] In the central districts of Ludhiana and Jullunder, however, with secure cultivation and better irrigation facilities, owner-cultivators held about 70 to 75 per cent of the cultivated land. These districts had a relatively larger proportion of small holdings as compared to the western districts. This area also had a higher proportion of occupancy tenants. They accounted for 15 to 25 per cent of leased out land in Ludhiana and Jullunder, about 35 per cent in Hissar and Ferozepur and 60 per cent in Hoshiarpur.[28] Table 3 shows the percentage of land cultivated by tenants in various districts of the state.

We find from the table that areas with a lower percentage of land under tenants have a larger proportion of land held by small owners, while areas with a larger proportion of land cultivated by tenants have a larger proportion of land owned by big landlords.

27. Niladhari Bhattacharya, Aspects of Agrarian Structure in Punjab (1870-1925), unpublished draft, 1979, p.6.

28. Ibid., p.6.

Table-3

Proportion of Total Cultivated Land Held in Various Districts by Tenants Paying Rent

District	Proportion of Cultivated Land
Kangra	35.4
Rawalpindi	38.8
Ambala	43.0
Hoshiarpur	53.3
Jullunder	44.9
Ludhiana	42.4
Ferozpur	53.9
Lahore	55.7
Amritsar	52.6
Mongomery	79.3
Multan	74.4

Source: W.Roberts and Kartar Singh, A Text Book of Punjab Agriculture, Lahore, 1947, p.516.

These relations between tenants and landowners changed over time. In Central Punjab a number of tenants were also owners of some land or occupancy tenants.[29] These occupancy tenants were able to improve their position vis-a-vis the tenants-at-will. They had greater opportunity of accumulating a surplus as they paid rents in cash which were fixed over a long period of time and remained the same even in years of increase in harvests.

29. Ibid., p.8.

However, the majority of the tenants were still tenants-at-will and in their case the landowners showed increasing preponderance towards share-cropping or batai. This change was not uniform all over and depended on the relative strength of the owner vis-a-vis the tenant. It was especially in areas of expanding production that share cropping was becoming dominant particularly in Ludhiana, Jullunder, Fazilka and Ferozepur areas of Central Punjab.[30] Even in the south-eastern districts cash rents declined. In general, however, landowners were able to strengthen their own position at the expense of the tenants and thus contributed to the factors making for an increase in inequality among the various groups and categories engaged in agricultural production which was the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population.

The misery of the small owners and tenants and peasants was further intensified by the economic depression of the 1930s when there was a sharp decline in incomes.[31] Prices fell at a slower rate than incomes and the cost of cultivation did not decline much. During the same period, the government passed in quick succession four anti-moneylender Bills[32] which, besides sending many

30. Ibid., pp.10-13.

31. Mridula Mukherjee, op.cit., pp.A54-A-55.

32. Details in Brij Narain, India Before and Since the Crisis, The Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad, 1939 (Vols. I and II), pp.539 f.

petty moneylenders out of business, only served to restrict the supply of credit when the peasant needed it most to meet the cost of cultivation and to keep himself afloat. This further aided the process of growth of the agriculturist moneylender who was more often than not a large landowner. The self-cultivating peasant proprietor was unable to pay land revenue and water rates which continued to be the same as before.[33] Tenants were worse off as they had to pay their half share of government demands and also meet the other costs of cultivation. At the same time more and more land was passing into the hands of the larger holders.[34] For instance, in the three western districts of Jhang, Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan, the small owners sold 2,151 acres of land while they purchased only 1,043 acres from the large land owners between 1931-32 and 1933-34. The magnitude of the sales becomes clearer when we learn that a small owner was defined as one owning below 300 acres of land. This classification was absurd in a province where 84.5 per cent of all owners owned less than 15 acres of land.

While the peasant proprietor and landless and tenants were most badly hit during the depression, the larger landowners and landlords and moneylenders also

33. M. Mukherjee, op.cit., p.455.

34. Brij Narain, op.cit., p.543.

experienced a fall in incomes and they too had to meet government demands.[35] It was at this time that various Kisan and Zamindar organizations rose up to demand reduction in land revenue and water rates. The Unionist Party was most active against the moneylender and contributed further to the rural-urban cleavage. However, it has been noted that despite sharpening disparities, the state failed to produce a vigorous peasant movement.[36] Moreover, the movement failed to involve most of the tenants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers and servants. The movement was mainly restricted to Jat Sikh peasant proprietors of Central Punjab giving priority to demands like land revenue and water rates while neglecting demands of the poorest sections of the peasantry.

In this changing structure of production relations it is imperative that we consider the position of the landless rural labour force. As in most parts of India, in Punjab too these agrarian relationships were intertwined in a relationship of patronage and exploitation embedded in the caste system. There was a relative permanency of ties between the high and low caste groups and the system functioned through vertical ties of interdependence of castes. In this system, known as sepi in

35. M. Mukherjee, op.cit., p. A55.

36. Bhagwan Singh Josh, Mridula Mukherjee and Bipan Chandra, "The Peasant Movement in Punjab Before 1947," Unpublished Preliminary Draft, 1979.

Central Punjab, most villages had their own artisan castes and servant castes.[37] From among these, the tanners and sweepers contributed most in terms of agricultural labour. The village servants of the Harijan castes were in the lowest paid occupations and were also expected to do begar or free labour for the Jats. Traditionally, remuneration for services rendered was in the form of a share of the patron's harvest which could either be a specific measure of grain or a fixed proportion of the harvest, or a combination of both.[38] Already during the twenties and thirties there was a steady increase in cash wages at the expense of gifts in kind.

Furthermore, tensions were emerging in the patron-client relationships and the servants were beginning to oppose the overlord position of the landed classes. In the northern and western parts of the province there were large scale conversions to Christianity and Islam among the untouchables. In the central districts tension arose out of increased production, price increase, growth in population, growth of towns and spread of education. In many villages servants were refusing to perform begar services and some also took outside employment. However, alternative opportunities were extremely limited and these changes were as yet in their incipient stages.

37. M.L. Darling, Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village, Oxford University Press, London, 1934, pp.261-278.

38. Ibid., pp.266-267.

The vertical unity of patron-client ties coexisted alongside a pattern of horizontal unity of castes forming alliances cutting across village boundaries.[39] This was mainly through official ties and exogaeneous marriage customs. Communal ties form another strong element of horizontal unity structurally relating the affairs of one village with those of others. This is not to say that horizontal ties are replacing vertical ones, for government's insistence on village and patti unity for administrative purposes has in fact served to provide an additional element of vertical unity. These two types of ties have to be considered together in any analysis of social, economic and political life of the Punjab peasantry.

As we have seen, there was an increase in interanl contraditions within Punjabi society which was bringing about significant changes in relations between various categories of the population. A combination of various economic and demographic factors made it increasingly difficult for all sections of the rural population to obtain their livelihood from the land and its produce. In this context two factors contributed in no small measure to the easing of pressure on the land and also indirectly contributed to the relative prosperity of some

39. Marian Smith, "Social Structure in the Punjab," in M.N. Srinivas (ed.), India's Villages, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, second (revised) edition, 1960.

pockets of rural Punjab. These were, employment in the army and migration in search of employment to other parts of India and abroad.

Having gained a reputation for loyalty during the Revolt of 1857, the Punjabis were recruited in large numbers in the army and army employment reached its highest level during the First World War. At the start of the war, Punjabis accounted for about half the total number of soldiers in the Indian army.[40] During the four years of war, Punjab contributed 3,46,614 recruits which formed over one-third of the total recruits.[41] Considering that Punjab had only one-thirteenth of the total Indian population, this contribution was indeed staggering.

Taking figures contributed by each of the three main religions of the state on 1st January 1915, Muslims accounted for 38.2 per cent of the total from Punjab, Hindus for 22.2 per cent and Sikhs 39.6 per cent. During the next three years Muslims contributed 55.4 per cent, Hindus 22.6 per cent and Sikhs 22 per cent. By then Muslims formed a total of 51.4 per cent of Punjab soldiers, Hindus 22.6 per cent and Sikhs 26 per cent. Considering

40. Michael O'Dwyer, India As I Knew It, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1925, p.214.

41. M.S. Leigh, The Punjab and the War, Superintendent, Government Printing, Lahore, 1922, p.38.

the fact that 51 per cent of the total population of Punjab were Muslims, 36 per cent Hindus, and only 12 per cent Sikhs, the contribution of Sikhs was comparatively larger.[42]

Inducements were offered to the Punjab peasant in the form of land grants in canal irrigated areas, and other honours and titles.[43] Further inducements were added in the form of free rations, better messing facilities, more pay and allowances and pensions.

Thus this section of the peasantry experienced economic upliftment and also sent remittances back home to the village. At the same time as pressure of population dependent on the land was being eased, a new socio-economic category was added to the Punjabi society.

The other important factor to be noted is the migration from rural areas of Punjab, especially from central districts to other parts of the state or abroad. The major reason for the migration was economic.[44] When towards the end of the 19th century irrigation canals were constructed in northern and north-western parts of

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42. Ibid., pp.44-45.

43. M.O'Dwyer, op.cit., pp.215-16.

44. M.K. Manchanda, "Early Indian Emigration to America," Punjab History Congress Proceedings, 7th Session, 1972, pp.263-281.

Punjab, cultivators from the thickly populated central districts were settled on these lands. Large groups of peasants migrated from Amritsar, Jullunder and Ludhiana to Lyallpur, Sheikhupura, Sargodha, Montgomery and Multan.[45] Usually about 55 acres of land was allotted to the peasants and a number of land grants were also made.[46] Initially, the biggest concentration of colonists was in Lyallpur canal Colony and most of the colonists here were Jat Sikhs from Central Punjab.[47] Canals were developed between 1892 and 1933 and this was also the period during which colonization continued. These colonies gradually developed into the most agriculturally productive part of the state. Pressure on land, however, continued to increase in Central Punjab leading to further fragmentation of holdings and this influenced emigration abroad.[48] A detailed account of migration from a village in Jullunder district in Punjab[49] indicates that to avoid fragmentation of land, landowning families with more than one son accounted for a larger number of migrations. Remittances

45. James Douie, The Punjab, North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1916; and
M.L. Darling, op.cit.

46. Douie, op.cit.

47. M.S. Randhawa, Out of the Ashes, Public Relations Department, Government of Punjab, 1954.

48. M.K. Manchanda, op.cit., p.266.

49. Tom Kessinger, op.cit., pp.186-197.

sent from abroad could be used for buying up more land or investing in land or property. It was the landed families who were initially able to raise enough resources for foreign travel.

Migration to America began in 1889 and by 1911 it was estimated that there were above 20,000 immigrants to Canada and the United States.[50] There was also a fair amount of turnover of immigrants and the number of those who actually travelled abroad was much larger. Another feature was that many of the soldiers who had left the army were prone to travel abroad.[51] Out of the total Indian immigrants to the United States during the early 1900s about 98 per cent were Punjabis of whom 75 per cent were ex-soldiers.

We have seen in the foregoing account that different sections of the Punjab peasantry responded differentially to the new forces set in motion by the British colonial regime. The British policy was determined by their desire to maintain a hold on the Empire. Punjab was important for their ends economically and politically and it became the 'favoured child' of the British Empire. Conditions were created for the growth

50. M.K. Manchanda, op.cit., p.278.

51. Ibid., p.278.

of commercialism and capitalism and certain groups were able to improve their power position at the expense of other groups. Also, different regions responded differentially to external stimuli. Thus it was that central Punjab, which forms the core of what is now left of the Indian state of Punjab, emerged as the most 'prosperous' in terms of economic growth and more diversified economically than other parts of the undivided province. The Canal Colonies, which were developed by the British in order to increase agricultural production, were largely settled upon by cultivators from Central Punjab. These cultivators, as we shall see later, were to return to the central districts after partition and contribute further to its economic development.

An important fact emerging from our account is that new structures of inequality were added and imposed upon those already existing and this further complicated the structure of agrarian relations. An understanding of the forms of inequality which crystallized during colonial rule is instrumental to our analysis of the agrarian structure as it emerged after the traumatic experience of the partition of Punjab in 1947.

Chapter-III

AGRARIAN DISPARITIES IN PUNJAB SINCE INDEPENDENCE

The partition of the State of Punjab at the time of Independence in August 1947 caused large scale dislocation of people from either side of the newly demarcated boarder. About 32.5 lakh persons migrated to East Punjab, most of them from rural areas.[1] Hindu and Sikh cultivators were displaced from an area of 6,700,000 acres in West Pakistan, while the Muslims left behind an area of 4,700,000 acres.[2] Most of those who had been settled on the canal colonies of West Punjab from the central and south eastern districts were resettled back in the region of their origin. Others were resettled in the rest of the evacuated areas. Because the land available in the Indian Punjab and PEPSU was much less than the land left by them in the west, a system of graded cuts was devised in making fresh allotments ranging from cuts of 25 per cent for those holding 10 acres in West Punjab to 95 per cent for those holding more than 1000 acres.[3] This system, it was felt, would contribute toward levelling down of the extreme inequalities in the structure of landholdings in pre-partition Punjab.

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1. Census of India, 1951, Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh, Bilaspur and Delhi, p.336.
2. M.S. Randhawa, Green Revolution, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1974, p.31.
3. Tarlok Singh, Towards an Integrated Society, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1969, p.223 f.

Even so, the inequalities already inherent since colonial times continued to persist. In early 1948, about 65.2 per cent of the landholders owned less than five acres of land each, while 83.3 per cent owned less than 10 acres, and 90.5 per cent owned less than 15 acres each.[4] Though we do not have figures of the percentage of land held by the various categories, it can be inferred that those owning large holdings account for a disproportionately higher percentage of total land held, than those holding small and miniscule plots.

Due mainly to the unsettled conditions prevailing at the time of partition and the social dislocation that took place the Punjab at the time of Independence was agriculturally a backward state and had to import large quantities of cereals to meet its consumption requirements in the first three years after partition. From the 1950s, however, production picked up and the state began exporting cereals to other parts of India and never had to import foodgrains again.[5] This re-emergence of the state as the most agriculturally productive in India has been largely attributed to the skill and enterprise of the

4. H.D. Malaviya, Land Reforms in India, Economic and Political Research Department, AICC, New Delhi, 1955, p.165.

5. Kusum Nair, In Defence of the Irrational Peasant, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979, pp.66 and 121.

colonists and other landholders of Western Punjab who were resettled in the rural areas of the Punjab that remained as part of India.[6] They showed greater propensity to work hard to regain the high economic status they enjoyed before partition. Psychologically too, it has been found, the refugees were more aggressive, energetic and enterprising in attempting to improve their economic position than non-refugees.[7] Thus, soon after partition, factors which had contributed to the emergence of central Punjab as an area of high productivity before partition, re-emerged and shaped the trends in agrarian production relations during the next three decades.

With a view to ostensibly restructuring land relations more equitably and thereby spreading the fruits of economic development over a wider base, the Government of Punjab embarked on a programme of land reforms soon after Independence and continued to introduce various land reform measures from time to time thereafter.

The acts passed in the first few years after partition were: The Punjab Tenants (Security of Tenure) Act, 1950; The Punjab Occupancy Tenants (Vesting of

6. M.S. Randhawa, Out of the Ashes, Public Relations Department, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh, 1954.

7. Stephen L. Keller, Uprooting and Social Change: The Role of Refugees in Development, Manohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1975.

Proprietory Rights) Act, 1952; The Punjab Abolition of Ala-Malkiyat and Taluqdari Rights Act, 1953; The Punjab Security of Land Tenures Act, 1953; The Patiala and East Punjab States Union Abolition of Biswedari Ordinance; and The PEPSU Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1955.[8]

Despite official claims about the successful implementation of these Acts,[9] there is overwhelming evidence to prove that landed interests more or less successfully foiled attempts to arrive at a more equitable distribution of land resources. Large scale evictions of tenants occurred as a result of tenancy regulations and even in anticipation of these legislations.[10] Tenants were constantly shifted from plots of land so as to prevent them from claiming proprietory rights on grounds of occupancy. This was facilitated by a provision in the act that a landlord could take over for self cultivation land up to 100 standard acres, later reduced to 50 standard acres. This meant that landowners who had less than this much area of land under self-cultivation could evict tenants from the rest of the land and in many cases settle it with tenants-at-will and sharecroppers. Furthermore,

8. M.S. Randhawa, Green Revolution, pp.46-47.

9. Ibid., p.47.

10. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect, p.45.

occupancy tenants could purchase land on which they remained for a minimum of 12 years, later to be reduced to five years.[11] As a consequence, we find that there was a decline in the area under tenancy during the fifties. Area under occupancy tenants declined from 1,369.4 thousand acres in 1947 to 829.7 thousand acres in 1957. Area under tenants-at-will declined more marginally, however, during the same period from 5,171.4 thousand acres to 4,974.1 thousand acres. Area under owner-cultivation rose meanwhile from 7,115.3 thousand acres to 11,830.4 thousand acres and the percentage distribution of area cultivated by owners rose from 51.4 per cent in 1947 to 66.4 per cent in 1957.[12] This shift was a result mainly of evictions for there was almost no opportunity for the tenants to buy land.

The other measure designed to alter the structure of land relations was the imposition of a ceiling on land-holdings and the distribution of land declared surplus thereon among the poor and the landless. In 1953 the ceiling on area under self-cultivation was fixed at 30 standard acres for local landowners and 50 standard acres

11. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Field Observations in the Punjab," in L.J. Walinsky (ed.), Agrarian Reform as Unfinished Business, Oxford University Press, New York, 1977, pp. 154-61.

12. A.S. Kahlon, et.al., Dynamics of Punjab Agriculture, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, 1966, p.31.

for displaced persons from Pakistan. In 1955, the area to be held by displaced persons was lowered to 40 standard acres and by 1972 the ceiling was lowered to 17.5 acres of irrigated land for both local and displaced landlords.[13] The Act, however, did not debar adult sons of landlords from holding the same amount of land and also there was large scale circumvention of the laws, due to a number of loopholes and benami transactions abounded. Even so by January 1974, 174,112 standard acres of land was declared surplus and instructions were issued to expedite their takeover and redistribution. Landed interests, however, resorted in most cases to litigation and by 1974, only 28,000 acres was left for distribution and this figure dwindled even further.[14]

The emergence of this scenario is not at all surprising in a state where political pressures operate effectively in the interests of the powerful. This fact came into prominence during the scandal of land grab in connection with the allotment of land evacuated by persons who migrated to Pakistan. The land, instead of being distributed among the landless and the poor, was auctioned off or sold at low prices to prominent politicians

13. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform *a la* Punjab," in Walinsky (ed.), op.cit., p.543.

14. Master Hari Singh, Agricultural Workers Struggle in Punjab, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 101-110.

and government officials.[15] A wave of protests followed and a Committee was constituted in July 1972 to enquire into the allegations. The Committee Report confirmed the allegations and made certain recommendations. But it had no judicial powers to enforce the recommendations and only suggested proper redistribution of the land left over rather than taking back land from the grabbers. These influential persons were able to hold on to the lands thus acquired through political manipulations.

In Punjab, moreover, political pressures and opinions against land reforms are reinforced by the views economists of the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) at Ludhiana.[16] They reject outright the utility of land reform measures to bring about economic development for they feel that a farm of 'good' size is necessary to permit the optimal use of technology for agricultural growth. They reject redistribution of land on the ground that a policy of land reform has much greater economic, social and political costs than the social costs of inequitable distribution of landed property.

15. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform a la Punjab," in Walinsky (ed.), op.cit., pp.542-550.

16. S.S. Johl, T.R. Gupta, Gurbachan Singh, Some Aspects of Land Reforms and Economic Development in India, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana (undated).

The debate on land reforms in the Punjab has been overshadowed by the publicity given to the introduction of the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) in 1961. Ludhiana district in Punjab was chosen for the IADP, which was later extended to the neighbouring districts. This programme and its attendant new agricultural strategy for growth was given wider prominence and encouragement by the government as it felt that higher productivity was the need of the hour to feed the rapidly increasing population. Punjab came to be known as the state which led the so-called "Green Revolution" owing mainly to its higher agricultural growth rates, and its higher rate of adoption of the new technology.[17] It is our contention that due to this overemphasis on growth rates, a number of socio-economic factors which have contributed to it have been lost sight of. Economic development in Punjab after Independence has been deeply influenced by the social and economic forces that crystallized in Central Punjab during colonial rule. Even within the state, different areas experienced differential growth rates depending on the nature of initial conditions. Moreover, different sections of the population were

17. The success of the 'Green Revolution' is, however, suspect and there is no clear tendency among IADP districts to show increasing productivity as compared to non-IADP districts. See, T.K. Oommen, "Impact of the Green Revolution on the Weaker Sections," Religion and Society, Vol.XXI (3), September 1974, pp.26-43.

affected differentially as a result of the policy of induced innovation. These are some of the factors which must be kept in mind when analysing shifts in agrarian relations in Punjab. These factors are particularly relevant to us in our analysis of the link between increasing agrarian inequalities and political mobilization of the peasantry, affecting as they do the validity of the single causation theory of inequality and class conflict.

We will first give a brief account of the economic indicators of agricultural growth in Punjab during the last three decades. Only then will we analyse shifts in land relations and their implications.

Assured supply of water is an important element in maintaining high agricultural growth rates. The British in the Punjab had built a number of irrigation canals, but on partition, only two-fifths of the irrigation canal mileage was left to India. Even then, over fifty per cent of the area was under irrigation in 1951. Table 4 gives district-wise distribution of area irrigated upto 1981.

It is clear from the table that about 85 per cent of the gross cropped area was irrigated in Punjab by 1981 while the all-India figure remained a mere 26.56 per cent.[18]

18. Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1981.

Table-4

Percentage of Gross Irrigated Area to Gross Cropped Area: Punjab State

District	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81(P)[a]
Ropar	9.5	17.0	35.5	46.9
Hoshiarpur	10.5	15.0	35.0	42.3
Gurdaspur	38.7	43.5	55.1	69.6
Amritsar	83.2	87.2	94.0	97.2
Jullunder	52.5	64.1	81.8	94.1
Kapurthala	54.5	62.1	82.2	91.5
Ludhiana	52.1	59.2	81.7	94.6
Patiala	37.8	40.7	69.4	83.4
Sangrur	67.4	57.3	81.4	93.2
Bhatinda	67.3	55.2	75.2	83.2
Ferozepur	59.4	66.3	82.3	92.3
Faridkot[b]	-	-	-	90.7
Total	52.3	56.0	74.7	85.5

a - P = Provisional.
b - Some tehsils of Ferozepur and Bhatinda districts were clubbed to create the new district of Faridkot in 1972.

Source: Census of India, 1971 - "General Report for Punjab," for figures of 1950-51, 1960-61 and 1970-71;
Statistical Abstract of Punjab 1981, for figures for 1980-81.

However, the three submontane districts of Ropar, Hoshiarpur and Gurdaspur lag behind the other districts just as they did three decades ago.

Irrigation was an important element in increasing yields and production and Table 5 gives an indication. It is clear that there was an increase in all three categories over the last two decades in the case of wheat and rice, but a slight downward trend in maize production and the area under it. This was due to the fact that new varieties of wheat and rice were introduced during the sixties and seventies under the High Yielding Varieties programme. This was at the expense of other less important crops. Even between wheat and rice, wheat experienced earlier growth than did rice. Inter-district variations in yield were, however, insignificant by 1980.[19]

Area under high-yielding varieties increased tremendously between 1967-68 and 1976-77 mainly in the case of wheat and rice as is evident from Table 6.

At the same time as there was an increase in productivity and area under high-yielding varieties, there was also an increase in the use of capital inputs. It has been noted, however, that Punjab farmers had started

19. Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1981.

Table - 5

Area, Production and Yield Per Hectare of Major Crops : Punjab State

YEAR	WHEAT			RICE			MAIZE		
	Area (1000 hectares)	Production (1000 metric tonnes)	Yield (Kg. per hectare)	Area (1000 hectares)	Production (1000 metric tonnes)	Yield (Kg. per hectare)	Area (1000 hectares)	Production (1000 metric tonnes)	Yield (Kg. per hectare)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1960-61	1400	1742	1244	227	229	1009	327	371	1135
1971-72	2336	5618	2406	450	920	2045	548	857	1564
1980-81(P)	2811	7674	2730	1182	3228	2736	382	613	1601

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1981.

Table - 6

Area Under High Yielding Varities of Crops in Punjab (1967-68 to 1976-77)

Year	Area under H.Y.V. as percentage of cropped area	
	Wheat	Rice
1967-68	34.6	5.4
1970-71	69.1	33.3
1973-74	84.2	86.8
1976-77	90.3	88.2

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1978.

investing in productive assets long before the introduction of the new agricultural technology in mid-sixties.[20] There was an increase of 46.6 per cent in capital inputs (working capital and fixed capital) between 1950-51 and 1964-65.[21] Value estimate of working capital, which included expenditure on seeds, manures, fuel oil, electricity, fertilizer, water and other miscellaneous items, increased from Rs.718,429,000 in 1950-51 to Rs.1050,426,000 by 1964-65. During the same period, quantity index of fixed capital, including expenditure on wooden and iron ploughs, sugarcane crushers, carts, wells, persian wheels, oil engines, electric pumps, tractors and bullocks, rose from 100.0 to 151.0. This is not to doubt the fact that the new technology may have restructured the capital invested and also led to new forms of capital equipment.

Capital expenditure on fertilizers and farm machinery shot up during the last two decades. Consumption of fertilizers increased from five thousand nutrient tonnes in 1960-61 to 213 thousand nutrient tonnes in 1970-71 and 762 thousand nutrient tonnes in 1980-81.[22] Moreover, in 1960-61

20. B. Sen, "Capital Inputs in Punjab Agriculture: 1950-51 to 1964-65," Economic and Political Weekly, December 27, 1970, pp. A163-A168.

21. Ibid., p. A165.

22. Statistical Abstract of Punjab 1981.

only 1.1 kilogram of fertilizer was used per cropped hectare. This figure rose to 37.5 kilogram per cropped hectare in 1970-71 and 105.0 in 1979-80.[23] The number of tractors increased from 4,935 in 1961 to 41,185 in 1972 and 1,20,000 in 1981. The number of tractors per 100 hectares of area sown in Punjab increased from one in 1961 to 10 in 1972 and 92 in 1981. Similarly, there was a rapid increase in the use of other agricultural machinery and implements like ploughs, sugarcane crushers, carts, oil engines and electric pumps for tube wells.[24] An indication of the districtwise relation between productivity and some important variables is given in Table 7.

The table presents some interesting results. The top four districts in terms of value productivity also show a high percentage of irrigated area, a high rate of fertilizer consumption per hectare except for Patiala which is mediocre, and a high concentration of tractors. The next four districts ranked by value productivity show a high percentage of irrigated area, except in Gurdaspur where it is mediocre; a high rate of fertilizer consumption

23. Ibid.

24. Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1981.

Table-7

District-wise Gross Value Productivity in Relation to Important Variables - 1976-77

District	Value productivity per hectare (Rs.)	% share to state total	% area to total cropped area	Cropping intensity	% area irrigated	Fertilizer consumption (kg./hectare)	No. of tractors per 1000 hectare (1975-76)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ludhiana	2455	10.5	8.6	164.4	87	95.8	24.5
Jullunder	2368	8.5	7.2	154.9	87	84.7	22.2
Kapurthala	2225	3.1	2.8	130.0	83	84.5	15.2
Patiala	2155	10.5	9.8	159.9	76	59.9	17.5
Gurdaspur	2126	6.9	6.6	159.3	65	71.3	9.3
Amritsar	2035	10.2	10.0	155.3	95	66.2	12.7
Ferozepur	2002	11.0	11.3	146.9	77	53.8	16.1
Sangrur	1965	11.0	11.4	156.2	83	43.3	12.3
Faridkot	1936	11.0	11.7	141.2	83	67.6	18.2
Ropar	1917	3.0	3.1	155.6	40	41.3	9.6
Hoshiarpur	1757	5.4	6.1	152.4	37	32.4	10.8
Bhatinda	1632	8.9	11.5	138.4	73	31.4	9.8
STATE	2064	100.0	100.0	150.8	77	59.5	17.3

Source: S.S.Grewal, J.L. Kaul and P.S. Rangi, Growth of Punjab Agriculture, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, 1978. And,
S.S.Grewal and D.S. Sidhu, Prosperity of Punjab Farmer - Reality or Myth, PAU, 1978.

in Gurdaspur and Amritsar but mediocre in Ferozepur and Sangrur; and a high to mediocre tractor concentration except in Gurdaspur where it is low. The last four districts in terms of productivity exhibit a high percentage of irrigated area for Faridkot and Bhatinda, but low for Ropar and Hoshiarpur; fertilizer consumption is high in Faridkot but low in the others and same is the case with tractor concentration. It is interesting to note that Faridkot comes ninth in the state in terms of productivity but is high on the list of irrigated area, fertilizer consumption and tractor concentration Bhatinda is high in terms of irrigation but low in fertilizer consumption and tractorisation.

While there has undoubtedly been an increase in productivity and capital inputs, a very different picture emerges when we consider changes in the landholding and tenurial structure and the occupational distribution of the work force.

Table 8 provides an insight into the structure of land holdings. It is evident from the table that the distribution of land holdings had become even more skewed in 1971 than 1961. The percentage of holdings below two hectares had risen from 16.98 in 1961 to 56.52 per cent

Table-8

Distribution of Land Holdings in Punjab - 1961 and 1970-71

1961		1970-71		
Size class (in hectares)	% distribution	Size class (in hectares)	% distribution	% distribution of area
Below 0.5	0.77	Below 0.5	22.54	1.94
0.5 to 1.0	5.96	0.5 to 1.0	15.08	3.73
1.0 to 2.0	10.25	1.0 to 2.0	18.90	9.36
2.0 to 3.0	16.09	2.0 to 3.0	12.34	10.37
3.0 to 4.0	11.09	3.0 to 4.0	8.08	9.63
4.0 to 5.0	14.35	4.0 to 5.0	5.74	8.82
5.0 to 6.0	6.55	5.0 to 10.0	12.27	29.28
6.0 to 12.0	25.38	10.0 to 20.0	4.25	19.39
12.0 to 21.0	7.19	20.0 to 30.0	0.60	4.55
21.0 and above	2.39	30.0 to 40.0	0.13	1.54
		40.0 to 50.0	0.05	0.73
		50.0 and above	0.02	0.66
Total	100.0		100.0	100.0

Source: Census of India 1961.
All-India Report on Agricultural Census 1970-71, Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, New Delhi, 1975.

in 1971, while percentage of holdings below five hectares had risen from 59.51 in 1961 to 84.68 in 1970-71. Furthermore, while 82.68 per cent of the holdings are below five hectares they cultivate only 43.85 per cent of the total area. At the other end of the scale there are only 5.03 per cent of the holdings which are above 10 hectares in the state, but they account for 26.21 per cent of the total area under crops.

Besides this there has been a change in the proportion of total area under owner cultivators and tenants. As we have already noted the area under tenancy registered a sharp decline. Table 9 presents a synoptic view. This was

Table-9

Area Cultivated By Owners and Tenants in Punjab (percentage)

	1947	1952	1957	1975
Owners	51.4	51.8	66.4	80.7
Tenants	48.6	48.2	33.6	19.3

Source: B.D. Talib, Agrarian Tensions and Peasant Movements in Punjab Since 1947, Unpublished Manuscript, 1979, p.13.

due to the fact that more and more landowners took to self-cultivation which became more profitable particularly after the large scale use of new agrarian technology. By implication this should mean the emergence of a substantial

agrarian proletariat. The ensuing analysis, however, will show that while there has been an increase in the landless agricultural labour force this has lead more to the pauperization of the agricultural work force as distinct from proletarianization with all its political overtones.

Figures are available for the last two decades indicating shifts in the distribution of the agricultural work force alongside changes in the tenurial structure. Table 10 provides a district-wise comparative picture. Some interesting conclusions emerge from Table 10. There was an increase in the population dependent on agriculture between 1961 and 1971 but a decline thereafter. However, the figure is still above the 1961 level. What is important is the fact that there has been a progressive decline in the proportion of cultivators in the work force but at the same time a sharp increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers, particularly between 1961 and 1971. In the next decade, the increase has been marginal. But it is clear that even during the last decade some cultivators have joined the ranks of the agricultural labour force for the decline in the percentage of cultivators to the work force is more than the decline in the percentage of agricultural population to the work force. The ranks of the

Table-10

Districtwise Distribution of Agricultural Work Force 1961, 1971, 1981

District	% of agricultural population to work force			% of cultivators to work force			% of agricultural labour to work force		
	1961	1971	1981(P)	1961	1971	1981(P)	1961	1971	1981(P)
Gurdaspur	49.18	58.85	60.04	41.18	39.68	35.20	8.0	19.2	25.1
Amritsar	46.00	55.85	54.49	36.50	35.45	31.51	9.5	20.4	22.4
Kapurthala	54.75	61.47	55.08	49.85	46.17	35.13	4.9	15.3	19.4
Jullunder	42.44	50.69	47.10	34.94	32.69	26.09	7.5	18.0	22.5
Hoshiarpur	57.24	61.51	61.63	52.54	43.71	37.11	4.7	17.8	21.5
Ropar	56.59	62.65	53.37	51.09	46.45	35.14	5.5	16.2	17.1
Ludhiana	45.18	50.80	44.49	37.08	32.90	28.58	8.1	17.9	16.4
Ferozepur	66.15	73.48	68.94	53.45	51.48	44.15	3.1	22.0	24.1
Faridkot	65.35	74.57	69.27	-	48.17	41.21	-	26.4	27.3
Bhatinda	72.92	76.42	68.97	62.72	54.52	46.18	12.2	21.9	22.2
Sangrur	67.07	71.48	71.36	54.77	50.98	46.33	12.3	20.5	24.3
Patiala	53.54	63.23	58.06	42.64	42.93	35.41	10.9	20.3	23.1
TOTAL	55.89	62.67	59.15	46.29	42.57	36.32	9.6	20.1	22.80

(P) = Provisional

Source: Statistical Abstracts, Punjab, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

agricultural labour force may also have been swelled by the migration of agricultural labourers to Punjab during the busy agricultural season from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, some of whom, as we shall see later, stay on permanently. Alongside there has been a shift to occupations outside agriculture during the last decade. For instance, workers outside agriculture accounted for 44.12 per cent of total workers in 1961. This figure shrank to 37.32 per cent by 1971 clearly offset by the increase in agricultural labour force. Between 1971 and 1981, however, there was an increase in the percentage of workers outside agriculture to 40.85 per cent.[25]

There has also been a decline in cultivated area per agricultural worker in the state from 2.23 hectares in 1961 to 1.75 hectares in 1971 and 1.50 hectares in 1981. This is significant because the percentage of agricultural workers to total workers has also declined during the last decade. The decline in cultivated area per agricultural worker seems to be more an indication of the increasing pressure of population on the land due to population growth. The population of Punjab increased by 23.01 per cent between 1971 and 1981 as against 21.70 per cent during the previous decade.[26] It seems likely that alternative

25. Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1971 and 1981.

26. Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1981.

occupational opportunities have not increased at the same pace as population but unfortunately we do not have any reliable data with which to confirm our observation.

Thus we find that there was an increase in structural inequalities in the agrarian sector at the same time as there was an increase in agricultural output and capital inputs. We have also seen that the larger landowners were also buying up more land and leasing in more land thus contributing to the rise in disparities. In the adoption of high yielding varieties of wheat and rice too, there was initially a greater propensity among the larger farmers to adopt,[27] though it was found that by the mid-seventies there was not much variation left in adoption rates among different farm size categories.[28]

However, when it comes to mechanization there is a definite relation between the size of farm and adoption of sophisticated implements and machinery. There has been a dramatic increase in the use of tractors and in recent years the use of combine harvesters has been steadily increasing in Punjab.[29] While it is true that a tractor

27. Biplab Dasgupta, op.cit.

28. G.S. Bhalla and G.K. Chadha, "Green Revolution and the Small Peasant," Economic and Political Weekly, May 15, 1982, p. 827

29. H.Laxminarayan, et.al., Impact of Harvest Combines on Labour-Use, Crop Pattern and Productivity, Agricole Publishing Academy, New Delhi, 1981.

can perform a wide variety of agricultural operations, it has been found that it does not have much use on farms of less than 10 acres in size,[30] and the same may be said of combine harvesters. However, it is on farms above 10 acres in size that the majority of the landless agricultural labour looks for employment since farmers owning less land use more family labour for farming operations. Thus, the use of machinery such as tractors and combines is clearly labour-displacing and should be resisted by the agricultural labour force. But in the Punjab there is as yet no organized militant agricultural labour movement, and we will, at a later stage, analyze the reasons as to why this is so.

There has emerged a link between the size of holding and the use of machine services. For instance, it is clear from Table 11 that smaller farms depend somewhat more on traditional capital inputs and try to supplement their limited stock of capital assets by hiring in machine services. Thus it is that differences in size of holdings accounts for differences in the nature of capital inputs.

Differences in the size of holding also account, to a large extent, for differences in household incomes.[31]

30. R.N. Ghosh, Agriculture in Economic Development, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, p. 87 f.

31. G.S. Bhalla, "Green Revolution in Punjab," unpublished manuscript, 1979.

Table-11

Composition of Material Cost by Farm Size Group: Punjab State

Item	I Below 2.50 acres	II 2.50 to 4.99 acres	III 5.0 to 7.49 acres	IV 7.50 to 12.49 acres	V 12.50 to 24.99 acres	VI 25.0 acres & above	All groups
Diesel and electricity	3.95	8.06	9.34	11.73	13.73	17.77	12.18
Drought cattle	46.63	45.96	39.23	30.37	21.89	13.15	29.05
Repair/Maintenance of implements	3.90	4.19	4.38	4.83	5.08	7.51	5.10
Marketing and transport	0.50	0.78	1.17	1.18	1.65	2.30	1.41
Hire charges paid out	4.10	2.46	2.11	1.98	1.39	0.81	1.76
Expenditure on seeds	9.76	9.03	10.90	12.15	12.71	13.69	11.93
Expenditure on manures & fertilizers	25.65	26.78	30.47	34.56	40.31	40.16	35.35
Other expenses	3.51	2.74	2.41	3.20	3.24	4.61	3.22
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: G.S. Bhalla and G.K. Chadha, op.cit., p.827.

We find that farm business income per hectare does not vary very much with different farm size groups but the total household farm business income does as Table 12 points out.

However, it has also been pointed out that non-farm sources of income mitigate to some extent the disparities in farm business income which are a result of land distribution pattern. Thus we find in Table 13 that income from non-farm activities is more for those owning less land.

Even with higher non-farm income, the farmers in the lowest bracket experience a deficit in income over consumption expenditure and this is indeed a matter of some concert. Even allowing for the fact that there is a tendency among households to underplay income and show less surplus, it is disturbing to find that households in the first three categories show deficit in income - and this is all the more alarming if we relate it to the fact that the majority of the households fall in these categories.

Further, it has been found from a survey of 1663 households in six farm size categories[32] that of all

32. G.S. Bhalla and G.K. Chadha, "Green Revolution and the Small Farmer," p.875.

Table-12

Farm Business Income by Size of Holding

	I Below 2.5 acres	II 2.5-5.0 acres	III 5.0-7.5 acres	IV 7.5-12.5 acres	V 12.5-25.0 acres	VI Above 25.0 acres	Average
Farm Business Income (Rs.)	1178.68	2361.84	4513.77	8168.15	13018.63	18333.57	6905.25
Business Income per hectare	724.67	663.42	758.97	852.14	786.11	665.92	771.92

Source: G.S.Bhalla,"Green Revolution in the Punjab," unpublished manuscript, 1979, p.35.

Table-13

Household Income: Punjab State

% of Household Income from	I Below 2.5 acres	II 2.5-5.0 acres	III 5.0-7.5 acres	IV 7.5-12.5 acres	V 12.5-25.0 acres	VI Above 25.0 acres	All size group
Cultivation	35.16	63.08	77.75	79.18	83.71	87.16	78.72
Non-farm activities	64.84	36.92	22.25	20.42	16.29	12.84	21.28

Source: G.S. Bhalla and G.K.Chadha, "Green Revolution and the Small Farmer," op.cit., p.875.

Table-14

Annual Household Income and Consumption

	I Below 2.5 acres	II 2.5-5.0 acres	III 5.0-7.5 acres	IV 7.5-12.5 acres	V 12.5-25.0 acres	VI Above 25.0 acres	All size group
Annual Household Income(Rs.)	3483.39	3227.17	5266.10	9200.09	14318.66	20898.11	8062.15
Annual Household Consumption (Rs.)	3693.96	5111.52	5911.68	7495.08	9209.16	12996.84	6888.84

Source: G.S. Bhalla, Green Revolution in Punjab.

households surveyed owning less than 2.5 acres of land, 31.43 per cent were below the poverty line, calculated at a per capita monthly expenditure of Rs.48.33 at 1974-75 prices (or Rs.15.90 at 1960-61 prices). Moreover, 23.62 per cent of the households surveyed owning land between 2.5 and 5.0 acres, were below the poverty line, and in the farm size category from 5.0 to 7.5 acres 19.06 per cent of the households surveyed were below the poverty line.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the data presented above pertains only to households owning some land. We have so far not taken into consideration the level of living of the landless agricultural labour population and other sections of the rural poor.

A pioneering study of identifying rural poverty in the Punjab has been done by Indira Rajaraman[33] who has analysed the structure of inequality over the decade 1960-61 and 1970-71 through a review of the consumption pattern of the rural households. The data was obtained from the National Service Scheme rounds of 1960-61 and 1970-71 and it is in order to highlight some of the results.

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33. Indira S. Rajaraman, Poverty, Inequality and Economic Growth: Rural Punjab 1960-61/1970-71, Cornell University Thesis, 1974, Microfilm, Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi.

Consumption figures were arrived at after dividing the population into three fractile groups: the poorest 30 per cent, a middle group ranging from 30 per cent to 74 per cent and an upper group of 74 per cent and above. Consumption figures by major commodity groups for the three fractile groups for 1960-61 and the price indices for 1970-71 are given in Table 15.

It is clear from Table 15 that the poorest group spends the most on food (79.81 per cent) while the middle group spends 75.19 per cent and the upper group only 58.59 per cent on food. However, for all other consumption items the proportion of expenditure rises from the poorest to the upper fractile. In terms of price indices it is notable that for all commodity groups except cereals the price rise over the decade faced by the poorest group was higher than that faced by the upper fractiles. This was particularly true for fuel and intoxicants and clothing than for non-cereal food and miscellaneous goods. Overall, however, the price rise faced by the three groups was more or less similar. This was because of the greater weightage for the poorer house holds of cereal consumption.

Data on absolute levels of consumption for each decile of the population between 1960-61 and 1970-71

Table-15

Percentage Composition of Consumption by Commodity Group for Three Homogeneous Fractile Groups of the Population: Rural Punjab, 1960-61 and Price Indices for 1970-71 (1960-61 = 100)

Commodity group	FRACTILE GROUP					
	Poorest		Middle		Upper	
	Consumption 1960-61	Price Index 1970-71	Consumption 1960-61	Price Index 1970-71	Consumption 1960-61	Price Index 1970-71
Cereals	33.83	198.35	28.84	201.69	17.87	204.33
Non-cereal food	45.98	211.49	46.35	209.25	40.72	210.19
Clothing	8.16	210.40	9.76	213.07	20.08	203.04
Fuel and intoxicants	5.58	233.50	6.50	227.37	6.57	220.18
Services & miscellaneous	6.43	192.40	8.02	187.00	9.90	190.90
Durables	0.02	207.00	9.53	207.00	4.86	207.00
TOTAL	100.00	206.96	100.00	206.83	100.00	206.26

Source: Indira S.Rajaraman, op.cit., pp.70 and 98.

reveals some interesting facts. Table 16 has the details. We find that there was a decline in the absolute level of consumption in the three poorest deciles between 1960-61 and 1970-71. From the 4th decile onwards,

Table-16

Absolute Levels of Consumption Marking Off Each Decile of Lorenz Distribution of Population, 1960-61 and 1970-71

Decile	Highest Consumption Level in Each Decile (Rupees)		
	1960-61	1970-71 at 1970-71 prices	1970-71 at 1960-61 prices
1st	14.31	27.48	13.27
2nd	16.66	32.39	15.64
3rd	17.86	36.96	17.85
4th	18.35	41.50	20.06
5th	21.43	48.78	23.58
6th	25.00	54.54	26.37
7th	26.99	64.27	31.07
8th	33.33	77.23	37.44
9th	44.48	101.02	48.98
10th	134.50	324.85	157.50

Source: I. Rajaraman, op.cit., p.104.

however, there was a steady increase in consumption thus indicating increasing inequality in terms of consumption expenditure.

We also have data on the percentage of the population living below the absolute level of consumption. We

find from Table 17 that upto Rs.16.66, the consumption level which marks off the poorest 20 per cent of the population in 1960-61, there is an increase at each consumption level in the population lying below that level.

Table-17

Percentages of Population Lying Below Selected Absolute Levels of Consumption, 1960-61 & 70-71

Per capita consumption level 1960-61 prices (Rs.)	% Poorer population in 1960-61	Equivalent consumption level 1970-71 prices (Rs.)	% Poorer population in 1970-71
11.66	5.00	24.14	6.32
14.31	10.00	29.62	12.36
15.72	15.00	32.54	20.52
16.66	20.00	34.49	24.95
17.13	25.00	35.46	26.90
17.86	30.00	36.97	30.02

Source: I.Rajaraman, op.cit., p.107.

Overall there was an increase from 20 per cent to 24.95 per cent. Thus there was a significant decline in the absolute standard of living.

The poverty line was constructed to read Rs.16.14 per capita per month at 1960-61 prices and the equivalent at 1970-71 prices was Rs.33.37 per capita per month.[34]

34. I.Rajaraman, op.cit., pp.109-135.

Thus, in more specific terms the percentage of the population lying below the poverty line was 18.31 in 1960-61 and 22.51 in 1970-71. For a state which leads the country in agricultural production and has experienced the so-called "Green Revolution" this fact is very disturbing indeed.

The increase in poverty is even more significant when related to the occupational composition of the population and the changes over the decade.

Table-18

Occupational Composition: Rural Punjab

Occupation	Percentage of all households		% of households below poverty line	
	1960-61	1970-71	1960-61	1970-71
Cultivators	53.02	51.17	47.11	31.35
Agricultural labourers	17.45	23.16	22.56	40.51
Other Labourers	10.07	9.0	11.83	10.05
Artisans	10.07	3.95	16.78	5.19
Traders	1.34	3.25	0.00	5.41
Others	8.06	9.65	1.73	7.49
TOTAL	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: I.Rajaraman, "Growth and Poverty in Rural Punjab," in Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia, International Labour Organization, 1977, pp.61-74.

Most significant has been an increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers as also a sharp increase in their percentage below the poverty line. On the other hand, there was a decrease in the percentage of cultivator households as also a sharp decline in their percentage below the poverty line. It is likely that the ranks of landless labour household have been swelled by an influx from among the small and marginal farmers and artisans who have been left without jobs owing to industrialization and commercialization. Some artisans, it is likely, have joined the trading community. Thus it seems that the process of growth has aided the medium and large farmers at the expense of the poor cultivators and landless agricultural labourers.

District-wise distribution of rural households below the poverty line are not available and even where attempts have been made the figures are not very reliable. A recent survey[35] on weaker sections in Punjab has taken an income of Rs.3600 per annum per household as the cut-off point for the poorest section of households. However, no attempt has been made to categorize households

35. Key Results of the Survey on Identification of Weaker Sections in Punjab, September-December 1980, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh, 1981.

on the basis of size of household and hence per capita income figures are not available. But a general indication of rural poverty is discernable from Table 19.

Table-19

Percentage of Households With Annual Income of Upto Rs.3600 in Rural Punjab

District	% of households with income below Rs.3600	District	% of households with income below Rs.3600
Gurdaspur	51.3	Ropar	34.8
Hoshiarpur	47.7	Jullunder	33.8
Patiala	44.5	Ferozepur	33.6
Sangrur	41.1	Ludhiana	31.9
Kapurthala	40.9	Bhatinda	30.8
Amritsar	39.9	Faridkot	25.9
PUNJAB	38.0		

Even after taking note of the weakness of the survey in terms of per capita income, it is significant that in all the districts over 25 per cent of the rural households earn less than Rs.3600 per annum. Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur top the list and are agriculturally also the most backward districts in the state. But even in the agriculturally advanced districts of Ludhiana, Jullunder, Ferozepur and Amritsar, between 30 and 40 per cent of the rural households

have an annual income of less than Rs.3600 per annum. In the state as a whole 38 per cent of rural households earn less than Rs.3600.[36]

Our analysis has shown that landless agricultural labour has experienced the greatest relative deprivation during a period of rapid agricultural growth. It will be in order to dwell briefly on the changing landowner-employee relationship. We noted earlier that even during the colonial period there were signs of the breakdown of the sepi system prevalent in the Punjab. The process continued at a somewhat faster pace with increased commercialization of the agricultural operations after Independence and particularly after the large scale induction of the new agrarian technology.

In Ludhiana district, for instance the sepi system has broken down and few signs of it remain.[37] Most of the labour households have shown a tendency to take up outside employment. The relationship between farmers and labourers has been stripped of its social and ritual bonds and has become a purely economic and business-like one. Most labourers are now paid in cash,

36. We must keep in mind the tendency to conceal the actual income from surveyors.

37. P.C. Aggarwal, The Green Revolution and Rural Labour, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, New Delhi, 1973, pp.89-102.

though a number of them are compensated in kind to the extent that meals are provided by the employer. A desire has grown among the rural labour households to raise their social status, and they no longer provide free services earlier known as begar. However, most labourers in this survey continued to be dissatisfied with their lot. The Jats still continue to wield economic and political power and the economic position of the farmers improved at a faster pace when compared to the labourers during the "Green Revolution" phase in this agriculturally most advanced district of Punjab. However, socially, the labourers feel their position has improved to a greater extent. In other districts too there has been a change in this relationship along similar lines with some variations.

Some indication of the nature of rise in real wage rates of agricultural labour can be had in comparison with growth in productivity of agricultural operations in Punjab.[38] Table 20 gives the real wage rates in Punjab between 1961 and 1977. We find that overall there has been a marginal increase in real wage rates, for all operations except cotton picking. However, the real increase was till 1971 after which wage rates declined though they remained above the 1961 level.

38. Shiela Bhalla, "Real Wage Rates of Agricultural Labourers in Punjab - 1961 to 1977 - A Preliminary Analysis," typed manuscript, 1979.

Table-20

Real Wage Rates in Punjab by Operation: 1961 to 1977
(Rs. at constant 1960-61 prices)

YEAR	OPERATIONS					
	Ploughing	Sowing	Weeding	Harvesting	Other Agri. Activities	Cotton picking
1961	2.50	2.49	2.65	2.59	2.49	2.00
1971	3.25	3.25	3.21	3.89	3.17	1.71
1977	2.87	2.87	2.81	3.11	2.86	1.72

Source: Shiela Bhalla, op.cit., p.2.

But when we relate the index of agricultural productivity to the index of real wages the gap remains very wide indeed as Table 21 reveals. Thus, while

Table-21

Index of Agricultural Production and Index of Real Wages by Operation: Punjab - 1961 to 1977

YEAR	Index of agri. production	INDEX OF REAL WAGES					
		Ploughing	Sowing	Weeding	Harvesting	Other agri. operations	Cotton picking
1961	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1971	208.97	130.0	130.5	121.1	150.2	127.3	85.5
1977	272.33	114.8	115.3	106.0	120.1	114.6	86.0

Source: Shiela Bhalla, op.cit., p.3.

output has increased more than two and half times over the entire period, the wages have risen only marginally and have gone down for cotton picking. This is yet another indicator of widening economic disparities.

Another important effect of the new technology on the landlord-employee relationship has been the impact on employment. An inconclusive debate has raged over whether the new technology is labour displacing or labour-augmenting.[39] With the introduction of new seed varieties and double-cropping, the demand for labour has indeed increased to complete harvesting and transplanting operations on time. However, mechanization has tended over time to have a labour-displacing effect, especially in an area like Punjab where, as we have seen, mechanization is increasing at a fast pace. In Punjab tractorization had an impact on employment, but tractorization occurred mainly at a time when with double-cropping, the demand for labour also increased. However, a recent phenomenon has been the introduction of combine harvestors.[40] There are as yet only a few such harvestors in operation. By 1978 there were about 190 harvestors in Punjab harvesting

39. The debate can be followed in articles in Economic and Political Weekly and in the writings of Economists of the PAU, Ludhiana. Too many circuitous arguments have taken place and we will only briefly mention the major ones.

40. H. Laxminarayan, et.al., op.cit.

only about 0.97 per cent of the wheat area and 2.67 per cent of the paddy area. The demand for combines was mainly from the larger landholders holding over 15 acres of land each. However, it was found that the use of combine harvestor led to a cut of 95 per cent in labour employment in farms using combines. Thus, over time, the long term effects of mechanization are labour-displacing. Already there is a scramble among larger farmers to hire in combine harvestors in Punjab and often a premium is paid to the hiring agent to get first use of the harvestor before another farmer. Hiring agencies have sprung up in various centres in Punjab, and some farmers owning combines hire them out as an additional source of income. A young public school educated farmer of a village in Ludhiana district opines that harvesting with a combine leaves him free of labour problems and he can complete harvesting on his 30 acre farm with the aid of two permanent labourers within three days. He deems himself 'lucky' in that he has a'good-sized' holding and ready cash to hire the harvestor well in time for harvesting. However, we must remember that other land-owners in this village, as also in other areas of Punjab, are not so 'lucky'. For the majority the main machine used at harvest time is the thresher and nearly all the cutting is done mannually and there is thus still a great demand for labour at harvesting time.

A peculiar phenomenon that has emerged in Punjab in recent years has been shortage of agricultural labour particularly during harvest time. This is peculiar because there has been an increase in the number of agricultural labourers among the work force over the last two decades. A part of the explanation can be found in out-migration in search of employment from the rural areas which has continued at an even greater pace than it did before Independence. A large number of Jat Sikhs moved to Britain and Canada in the fifties and sixties, as well as a smaller number of scheduled castes. In the seventies there began a spurt in migration to the Gulf countries taking advantage of the spurt in industrial and construction activities. A recent analysis of migration in Ludhiana district[41] shows that 93.4 per cent of these who migrated out of the district did so in search of employment or improvement in income. About 54.9 per cent of the out-migrants came from cultivating households, and 74 per cent of those who went abroad belonged to families who owned some land and were thus able to raise some capital. Out of the total out migrants only 15.1 per cent belonged to the Scheduled and low castes. This indicates that members of cultivating households who earlier helped in agricultural operations, are now migrating increasingly in search of alternative

41. A.S. Oberoi and H.K. Manmohan Singh, "Migration Flows in Punjab's Green Revolution Belt," Economic and Political Weekly, March 29, 1980, pp.A2-A12.

employment to augment family incomes. This leaves the agricultural labour households, who have lesser opportunities to find alternative employment, to do the agricultural operations. This also explains, to an extent, the shortage of labour experienced in the state during harvesting. This point, however, needs examining in greater depth and as yet no convincing explanations of labour shortages have been conclusively put forth. What is important is that shortage of labour cannot be fully explained by increasing labour demand due to double-cropping introduced as a result of the new agrarian technology.

To fill in the void created by labour shortages, a phenomenon peculiar to Punjab has manifested itself in the last decade. This is the large scale seasonal migration of agricultural labour from the agriculturally backward regions of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They came on trains which pass through Punjab to Amritsar. Earlier Jat landlords used to camp at railway stations at Khanna and Ludhiana to get whatever labour they could. Now there is also an onward flow to Jullunder and Amritsar. This labour is cheaper than indigenous Punjabi labour and is happy to get whatever wages they earn for it is still higher than what they would get in their own

state. Many of them stay on beyond the harvests and become permanently attached to the various Jat households. They have become part of the agrarian social system in Punjab. A new form of exploitation has sprung up in central Punjab to replace the old patron-client ties that have largely been eliminated. This migrant labourer is often attached without any salary and the only payment is in the form of food and clothing. As yet this phenomena is on a small scale but is dangerous nonetheless. The vast majority of the migrant labour, however, continue to work on wages and return to their native villages in the off-season. This is an interesting phenomena which demands more attention from researchers.

In this chapter we have enumerated certain structural changes that have taken place within Punjab since India's Independence as a result of the introduction of planned strategies for agricultural development. These changes have taken place in the face of forces of continuity from the past. Regional variations continued to influence the process of agricultural modernization and the already well-endowed regions were in the forefront of increased agricultural growth.

Among the various categories of the rural population too, the economically powerful sections strengthened their economic and political power through accumulating

the gains of the new agrarian technology in the absence of the success of distributive agrarian reforms. The programme of induced innovation only further served to enhance the structures of inequality already inherent within the rural agrarian structure. Only this inequality became more exposed and open through a breakdown of Jajmani patron-client ties which had served to mystify exploitation in the traditional system.

This emergence into the open of structural inequalities have important political implications in terms of peasant political participation and agrarian revolt in Punjab. We have earlier, in the introductory chapter, pointed out the popularity of the view that growing disparities in living standards among the agrarian categories would lead to the polarization of classes. The resultant pauperization and proletarianization, it is felt, would lead to class conflict and political unrest. We also pointed out alternative views which go on to show that there are a variety of factors which mediate the link between agrarian disparities and political mobilization. We have, in this chapter, noted the increase in agrarian inequalities in Punjab, as also the fact that there is a fairly widespread dispersal of the population among the various sectors of the economy. In the next chapter we will dwell on the power structure in rural

Punjab and other socio-economic factors which influence the nature of political activity in the state and have served to retard the crystallization of forces of class conflict.

Chapter-IV

THE PUNJAB PEASANTRY AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

It is clear from the previous chapter that the spread of agricultural growth and modernization was uneven and skewed and was channelled through the already existing economic and power structure. If anything, the induced strategies for change led to a widening of existing disparities. Fears were expressed in the early years of the "Green Revolution" that the increase in inequalities would lead to serious repercussions in terms of political stability.[1] It was supposed that class polarization would increase and create contradictions which would stimulate class conflict, owing to a desire among the growing proportion of the depressed section to change the status-quo. However, as we have noted earlier, the relationship between class polarization and political action is not as simple a process as one made out to be earlier on. In India there are a number of vertical linkages in the rural setting which still continue to be important and hinder the formation of class-type horizontal linkages, though by no means negating these ties.

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1. Wolf Ladejinsky, "Green Revolution in Punjab" and Francine R. Frankel, India's Green Revolution.

In the Punjab, as in the rest of India, the rural socio-economic structure is far too complex to be analysed as falling simply into the class of haves and have-nots. Caste, class, factional and religious factors intertwine and coincide to produce a structure of relations which is hard to define. These socio-economic factors continue to mediate the process of peasant political action. They serve to differentiate the various categories of the rural population in terms of their interests and occupations and contribute to the weakness of the peasant movement in the state. The changes stimulated from without interact with indigenous social forces to determine the response in terms of political participation.

In this chapter we will first analyze the traditional vertical and horizontal relations and the extent to which they still function in the rural setting of Punjab. We shall then outline the nature and extent of peasant movements in post-Independence Punjab and assess the extent to which they post a threat to the existing power structure.

Within rural Punjab there exist fundamental cleavages which run deep into the fabric of social life and have significant political implications. Factions have traditionally been an important element through

which political power is transmitted.[2] Jats have been the dominant land-owning caste in Central Punjab ever since Sikh rule. The economic power thus gained reinforced political and social status. This dominant position of the Jat Sikh peasantry in Central Punjab was reinforced by the colonial regime through various measures adopted in order to appease this section of the population. In the absence of effective land reform measures after Independence, the landowning groups further strengthened their economic position by cornering most of the gains emanating from the introduction of the new agrarian strategy of growth. Factions in the Punjab have been a persistent form of political organization and there are similarities between factions as they define relations between the Sikh Misls in the 18th century and as they continue to operate in the present era. Political power is dispersed through a number of units, each headed by a political leader with supporters and followers in a specific local area. Factions are vertical linkages cutting across village boundaries and dividing villages. It is a kind of system of patronage in which the patron extends protection to his followers in return for political support. The ties which are important for the Jats

2. An analysis of factional politics among Jat Sikhs has been done by Joyce Pettigrew, Robber Noblemen, Ambika Publications, New Delhi, 1978.

are kinship ties, affinal ties and patron-client ties and these ties are maintained and protected through the factions. Factional power stems from economic power associated with the landholding pattern, the mode of operating the land, and the patron-client ties. The mode of production divides the interests of each landholding Jat family from another on the basis of competition over land. Affinal ties also have the effect of organizing Jats into innumerable small isolated units and the only uniting factor is a common political association with the same political leader.

We must not, however, overemphasize the factional mode of politics, for the caste factor plays an important role on the political front even though the Sikh religion preaches against division of the population on caste lines. An extended Jat family can own anything between two to five acres of land, or now, no land at all, to 50 to 100 acres and ranking within the caste on the basis of the amount of land owned is not politically significant among the Jats for there is constant shifting in the amount of land held by the family since at the death of the patriarch, land is usually divided among all the surviving sons. Caste ties bind Jats together while factional ties divide them. Even the smallest landowning

Jat or a landless Jat finds himself closer to the farming class as a whole and is reluctant to align with the landless labourers who are mainly Harijans or Mazhabi Sikhs. These Mazhabi Sikhs have now dissociated themselves from the patron-client sepi ties and become independent contractual or permanent labourers and have also aligned themselves politically and religiously with the Rai Sikhs, a sect comprising of the Scheduled Caste Sikhs. However, in many instances, Jats are still able to divide Mazhabi labourers working for them to vote for their supporters as against the faction of another Jat landlord. These alliances cut across caste lines. There is thus an interplay of class and caste factors which complicate agrarian relations between the various groups.

A factor which has blunted the edge of class consciousness and class conflict is communalism. Right from colonial times, different religious groupings in Punjab have had differential access to economic opportunities. In fact the colonial power encouraged this differentiation. The Sikhs were mainly concentrated in the rural areas and from among them Jat Sikhs formed the bulk of the Sikh peasantry. They owned, and continued to own, the majority of the cultivable land and acquired power through this very fact. On the other hand, the trading and money-lending classes were mainly Hindu castes like Khatris,

Aroras and Banias. They were based mainly in the cities. There existed a conflict of economic interests between the two, complicated by the differences in religion and through the accentuation of the rural-urban divide.

This pattern of differentiation has continued after Independence and a recent study[3] has shown that even in 1971 Sikhs formed the majority of the population in the rural areas and Hindus in the urban areas. Table 22 has the religious distribution by districts. In every district and all over Punjab the percentage of Hindus in the rural population is lower than their proportion in the urban population. The reverse trend is true for the Sikh population. However, it has been pointed out[4] that while religious differentiation does not necessarily influence the choice of occupations, what does is the caste system. In the Punjab due to certain historical reasons most of the agricultural castes are Sikhs and most castes following non-agricultural occupations are Hindus. Different religious categories have been placed in different sectors of the economy. But tension is created by the fact that

3. Victor S. D'Souza, "Economy, Caste, Religion and Population Distribution: An Analysis of Communal Tension in Punjab," Economic and Political Weekly, May 8, 1982, pp. 783-92.

4. Ibid., p.784.

Table-22

Percentage Distribution of Hindu and Sikh Population by Districts and by Total, Rural and Urban Composition

District	HINDU			SIKH		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Bhatinda	22.56	12.92	61.13	76.93	86.67	37.96
Amritsar	23.43	8.23	60.31	74.22	89.29	37.65
Sangrur	27.14	21.25	50.25	66.90	75.20	34.33
Ludhiana	33.22	16.88	63.82	65.71	82.47	34.34
Ferozepur	33.58	24.02	72.22	65.07	74.82	25.69
Kapurthala	38.02	28.45	69.69	61.26	70.80	29.68
Ropar	43.49	39.21	67.46	55.61	60.10	30.51
Patiala	44.37	37.49	63.92	54.24	61.03	34.93
Gurdaspur	48.02	40.94	75.90	44.82	51.03	20.38
Jullunder	53.91	44.19	76.49	44.90	54.73	24.04
Hoshiarpur	59.25	57.13	74.65	39.38	41.60	23.23
PUNJAB	37.54	28.56	66.39	60.21	69.37	30.79

Source: Victor D'Souza, op.cit., p.784.

agriculture and trade are also inextricably linked together in the production, distribution and consumption structure of the economy. As a result of agricultural modernization, more and more inputs and outputs pass through the hands of urban traders and this results in a clash of economic interests between the dominant castes of the two religious categories. Thus communalism has proved to be another form of hinderance to the crystallization of class forces.

The scenario is further complicated by the fact that even within each religious category there are differences in terms of castes.[5] Among the Sikhs we have the Jat agriculturists, the Khatri and Arora non-agriculturists, and the scheduled castes. Here also, caste categories coincide largely with economic categories. Among Hindus too there is a division between upper and lower castes.

Thus religious, caste and class factors coincide in various ways to produce cleavages that run deep within Punjabi society. The inegalitarian social structure has been further reinforced by the forces of economic growth and modernization and this has created more communal tension rather than class struggle as economic opportunities

5. Amarjit Singh Narang, "Punjab: Development and Politics," in Gail Omvedt (ed.), Class, Caste and Land in India, Special Number, Teaching Politics, January 1982, pp. 114-34.

continue to be channelled along communal lines. It is in the light of these various kinds of linkages within Punjabi society that we must look at the nature and extent of the conflict between various sections of the rural population in recent decades.

We must, however, guard against over emphasising caste, communal and factional ties. We have already noted the tendency among various sections of the rural population to migrate in search of outside occupations. Migration began during British rule and continued on a larger scale after Independence. Out data also shows a decrease in the percentage of the agricultural work force to the total work force in Punjab during the last decade. Even the population engaged in agricultural work is divided between cultivators and landless agricultural labourers. Furthermore, 40.15 per cent of the total working population is engaged in occupations other than agricultural. Added to this is differentiation of the agricultural work force in terms of caste, communal, factional and class factors and we come up against a situation of near fragmentation which only serves to weaken the forces that generate proletarianization and class conflict.

In the post-Independence period peasant political action has been closely linked with the growth and policies

of the Communist parties as they have been the main organisers of the peasantry. They have taken up cudgels on behalf of all sections of the peasantry and some of the agitations launched after Indepedence in Punjab are: the campaign for land allotment under the rehabilitation policy in 1948-49; tenant struggle for land reforms in PEPSU from 1948-1952; anti-betterment levy struggle of 1959; food campaign for the rural poor in 1959; land grab agitation in 1970; the Abadkar agitation upto 1979; campaign for cheap inputs and remunerative prices; campaign for minimum wages of agricultural labour; campaign for house sites and liquidation of debt of agricultural labourers; and local protests against decline in prices of cotton, sugar-cane and potatoes and non-availability of diesel and other inputs for use in agriculture.[6]

One of the most important recent agitations to be launched has been the tenant Abadkar agitation.[7] After reallotting land evacuated by migrants to Pakistan, inferior lands in the river beds of the Sutlej, Ravi and Beas were reclaimed mainly by Harijans and Ravi Sikh settlers. The Central Government, when handing over the

6. B.D. Talib, op.cit., pp.25-26.

7. Ibid., pp.31-35.

lands to the State Government suggested that these lands should be distributed among landless Harijans, landless tenants and other poor cultivators. The State Government however, decided to openly auction the evacuee land with the result that some influential persons and those with means were able to purchase most of the land and the abadkars were threatened with eviction. An agitation was launched lasting nearly two decades till finally in 1979 the State Government conferred proprietory rights on small occupants owning not more than five ordinary acres of land. Some of the areas where there was intense confrontation were Nakodar Tehsil in Jullunder district, Matteware in Ludhiana district, and Kot Issekhan area in the Zira Tehsil of Ferozepur district.

Another important struggle was the anti-betterment levy agitation also launched in 1959. When the State Government levied a tax on all farmers whose lands have benefitted by the Bhakranangal Project and other new irrigation schemes. This tax was in addition to abiana, land revenue and local tax. The agitators were ruthlessly dealt with and after a great deal of negotiations and political manouverings, the levy was dropped by the United Front Government in Punjab in 1967.

Another important agitation was the land grab agitation of 1970 which we have mentioned in the previous chapter.

After the wave of agricultural modernization and growth and the resultant increase in economic inequality, focus came to be placed on the demands of the landless agricultural labourers. This was particularly so because of the sharp increase in the proportion of landless agricultural labourers in comparison to other agricultural workers during the sixties.

We must note here that the demands of the different sections of the rural population were highly dissimilar. The main demands of landless agricultural labourers are an increase in labour wage and for better working conditions. For the small landowners the main demand is for more land and lower costs of inputs. However, the middle and rich capitalist peasantry demands a cut in farm input prices, and an increase in farm commodity prices, and there is direct clash of interests with the rural poor. However, the cause of all these categories is being exposed by the same communist party and its sincerity to the cause of the rural poor is suspect,[8] and it has failed to build a base among the rural poor. By February 1979, the total membership

8. Nirmal Singh Azad, "Recent Farmers' Agitations in Punjab," Economic and Political Weekly, April 20, 1975, pp. 702-706.

of the Communist Party of India backed Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha was only 1,22,571[9] a number which formed only a fraction of the total rural landless population. The Communist parties and other organizations such as the Punjab Zamindara Union and Punjab Wahikar Union, which profess to organize the poorest rural manual workers, are more often than not controlled by the interests of the middle class and rich peasantry. While both the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) profess to espouse the cause of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, they in practice call for the unity of the peasantry on issues such as remunerative prices for agricultural produce.[10] They fail to see any fundamental contradiction between the interests of rural rich and middle peasants and the poor peasants and landless labourers.

There have, however, been some struggles of agricultural workers during the last decade. According to a survey[11] the agricultural labourer tension was intense and widespread in both ex-landlord and Rayatwari areas of cultivation. The main area of these tensions was the

9. Master Hari Singh, op.cit.

10. Gail Omvedt, "The Agrarian Economy and Rural Classes," in Frontier, Vol.13, Nos.8-14, October-November 1980.

11. B.D. Talib, op.cit.

Malwa region, particularly Kot Bhai, Malat, and Lambi area of Muktsar sub-division in Faridkot district. In this region a number of tenants have been evicted and turned into agricultural labourers on big farms. In the Doaba region, the main cause of the tension has been the increase in exploitation through the changing mode of wage payment from kind to cash and of replacement of permanent labour for casual worker or for contractual system of wage labour.

We must now analyse the conditions under which unionization and organization of the agricultural work force takes place. We have earlier noted the conditions which favour unionization of agricultural workers. One view point emphasizes the importance of growing class polarization as leading to peasant political participation and others have stressed on the number of the agricultural work force and the perception among them of the feeling of deprivation.

A recent study on unionization among agricultural labourers in the Faridkot district of Punjab[12] has analysed factors like polarization, political consciousness, and influence of a long-standing radical political party,

12. Pranab Bhattacharya, Unionization of Agricultural Labourers, Research Study No. 80/1, Agricultural Economics Research Centre, University of Delhi, 1980.

and has come to the conclusion that while these factors are important the more important reason for rapid unionization of the labourers in Faridkot district was the nature of the leadership provided by the Communist Party of India in organizing labour. This element needs to be noted particularly as it emerges from an analysis of a district of Punjab which has witnessed the most successful and widespread agricultural workers struggle. Among the rural folk charismatic and personal appeal of some leaders are an important element which draw the population towards political participation.

However, a closer look at the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in the area is necessary. We find that according to the 1971 Census Faridkot district has 29 per cent Scheduled Castes in its population, this is the second highest in Punjab, with the state average being 24.7 per cent. Coupled with this is a fact that Faridkot district has, according to the 1981 Census, the highest percentage of agricultural labour population in Punjab at 27.3 per cent of the total occupational distribution of the work force in the district. Furthermore, in the sample villages, the Scheduled Caste population ranged from 41 per cent to 52 per cent and the percentage of agricultural labourers in the total agricultural work force

ranged from 44 per cent to 57 per cent[13] and this is a very high concentration indeed. Most of the agricultural labourers in this district as in other districts of Punjab belong to the Scheduled Caste category. It has been pointed out that these agricultural labourers live under miserable economic conditions and we can say with a fair degree of certainity that this district provided a place ripe for the organization of agricultural labourers to fight for better working conditions and higher wages. That the final clinching point is the diligence, devotion and character of the leadership cannot be doubted. But good leadership cannot achieve much without focussing on the actual existential conditions of the work force and the spread of the conviction among them of the squalidness of their conditions and the ability of the workers themselves to do something about their living conditions.

There are other factors also which are beginning to help in the process of organization of the rural work force. A major factor is the near total breakdown in the traditional sepi relations leading to a contractual form of employment in place of payment in kind. They no longer get facilities to the extent they got earlier and in many villages, whenever they rise up in revolt over wage demands

13. Ibid., pp.30-31

the landlords retaliate by imposing Nakabandi, which is stopping the labourers from their traditional right to take fodder from the landlords fields and free access to the fields to relieve themselves. This is a form of social boycott and has become very common particularly during harvest time when there is a spurt in protest movements. At the same time, there is a slightly increasing trend in education among the Scheduled Caste population and a growth of social awareness and a sense of dignity. There has also been a steady trend towards growing politicalization of agricultural labourers through voting and elections and signs of growing class cleavages have emerged.

However, we have already noted the caste ties that bind the landed sections together and other cleavages which hinder the crystallization of class-like features. The Jats are the dominant land-owning caste but there are many among them who are small and marginal farmers and landless. They, however, display a greater affinity with the middle and large farmers and do not actively rise up against them. Moreover, they form a category which aspires to acquire more land and is committed to joining the class of the landed. The powerful middle and large peasantry has found this category a convenient buffer

between them and the landless agricultural labourers. Furthermore, landless Jats are in a better position to take land on lease from the landed Jats than are Scheduled Caste landless.

It is only recently in some areas that the poor Jat households have stopped actively siding with the landed. For instance, in village Gurditpura near Doraha Mandi in Ludhiana district,[14] where workers demanded better wages, the poor Jats did not involve themselves and in fact gave quiet sympathy to the landless agitators. However, they did not actively side with the landless either.

However, the landowners have found ways and means of getting over labour problems and in recent years have turned to engaging more and more migrant labour from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.[15] These workers flood the labour market during harvest time and this just the season when indigenous labour raises demands for increase in wages etc. By turning to migrant workers the landowners are able to sap the strength of the agitators. This, coupled with the fact that there is a fair amount of

14. Aminder Pal Singh, "Farm Workers vs. Rich Peasants - Caste and Class in a Punjab Village," Economic and Political Weekly, October 27, 1979, pp. 1753-54.

15. Amarjit Chandan, "Plight of Migrant Workers," Economic and Political Weekly, April 28, 1979, p.755.

migration of workers out of the area in search of alternative employment, adds to the overall weakness of the organized agricultural labour movement. The migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have not yet been organized. It has been pointed out[16] that this is due to the fact that the Communist parties are not really interested in organizing them as they do not enjoy voting rights in Punjab. This reveals the narrow political aims of the Communist parties who organize workers mainly to gain more seats in the local and state elections.

Thus, despite the poor economic conditions of a sizeable section of the rural population, attempts at organization have been sporadic and unorganized to a great extent. Factional, caste, and communal politics continue to hold sway to hinder mobilization of the poor as against the rich. Even in the present day democratic set up, the traditional power blocks have monopolized the electoral process and strengthened their political position in state politics through their economic and social power in the traditional rural economy. Thus class conflict has not taken root in rural Punjab and in the recent past a further setback has come in the form of communalism and religious fundamentalism which has raised its head.

16. Ibid.

Economic, political and social power continues to be channelled largely through traditional lines and changes have been very slight indeed. Thus, the popular viewpoint of class polarization and widening disparities leading to agrarian unrest and proletarianization of large sections of the rural work force does not ring true as far as the state of Punjab is concerned. This is not to say that there is no tensions between the rich and the poor. Tensions do exist and pauperization has taken place. But a variety of factors serve to mystify and divert attention from the actual nature of the contradictions.

Chapter-V

C O N C L U S I O N

The preceding analysis shows very clearly that socio-economic disparities have increased in Punjab since Independence. The new agricultural strategy of growth adopted with great success has been at the cost of equity and social justice. Land reform legislations designed to bring about a more egalitarian pattern of landholding did not meet with much success. The gains of higher productivity following the sharp increase in capital inputs were channelled along the already existing structures of inequality thereby further reinforcing the already existing inequality. Thus we found that a considerable proportion of the population in rural Punjab continues to live below the poverty line. This is indeed a matter of some concern in a state which has experienced the highest agricultural growth rate in India and has exhibited significant progress in many spheres.

What is notable, however, is that the state has not shown much signs of agrarian unrest on the scale initially feared. One school of thought which gained in popularity during the early 70s propounded the theory that the impoverished sections of the peasantry and the

landless agricultural labourers would rise up in revolt if steps were not taken to ameliorate their living conditions. We have, however, seen in this dissertation, that in Punjab at least this thesis has so far not been proved to be true. This is not to say that there are no signs of tension in the state. Tension between various sections of the population exists, but in terms of political activity this tension is channelled along traditional lines of conflict. New forms of political alliances and conflict which do emerge from time to time arrive at a compromise with the traditional mode of politics from which there is no clear break as yet. Accommodative politics have retarded the crystallization of forces which make for a conflict between classes in spite of pauperization of a sizeable section of the peasantry.

A fundamental question which emerges from our analysis is: Why has Punjab not witnessed the growth of a significant peasant movement or a movement of the depressed sections of the peasantry and landless agricultural labour force? There is no simple or straightforward answer to this question. It is clear from our analysis that a variety of factors interact to determine the nature of peasant political participation and in concluding our arguments we must draw on some of these.

Different states and regions in India have responded differentially to the measures taken by the Government to promote economic development. We have, in this thesis, stressed the importance of the differential nature of historical experiences which shape the relations between various sections of the population and determine the nature of response to the new forces of change. This fact is only now beginning to be recognized by social scientists. We have, therefore, highlighted certain historical processes which have shaped the trends in agrarian relations in Punjab.

Different sections of the Punjabi population had traditionally differential access to economic resources. The Jats and Rajputs were the traditional landowning castes with the former, mainly Sikh Jats, replacing the latter as the main revenue payers in Central Punjab under Ranjit Singh. The Khatris, Aroras, and Banias, mainly Hindus, were the traditional trading castes. In Western Punjab, Muslims were the main landholding category. The response of these sections of the population to the general stimulation of forces of commercialization after British annexation was coloured largely by their traditional occupations.

Furthermore, the British were more concerned with securing the political stability of their rule and gaining the maximum in economic terms. It served their purpose to keep the population divided on caste and communal lines. This they did most effectively through the adoption of a policy designed to procure and maintain the loyalty of the landed gentry. Thus, when alongside the rising tide of commercialism, there was an increase in sale and transfer of land to the traditional banias and moneylenders, the British Government in India stepped in to legislate against such transfers. As we have noted, however, this measure, while curbing transfers to the trading and moneylending castes, only led to the creation of a new class of moneylenders from among the larger landowners. Sale and mortgage of land continued on an even larger scale.

The British in the Punjab also took measures to promote agricultural production and constructed a large network of irrigation canals. These canal colonies were colonized mainly by Sikh Jat peasants from the overpopulated central districts of the state. This prosperous section of the peasantry was later to return to the central districts after partition and contribute to the agricultural prosperity of Indian Punjab after Independence.

Further, various sections of the Punjab peasantry were recruited in large numbers in the armed forces having gained a reputation for loyalty to the British during the revolt of 1857. Salaries and pensions enriched many of these families and a growing number of individuals were able to travel abroad in search of occupations.

Thus by appeasing some sections of the peasantry, the British in Punjab were able to retard the growth of large scale peasant movements. When there was a spurt in peasant political activity during the 1930s, this was confined to demands such as reduction in land revenue and water rates of the rich and middle peasants, while tenants, share-croppers and landless agricultural labourers were left out of the movement. The agricultural labourers were, moreover, still bound within the sepi system and enjoyed a certain amount of security which served to camaflage the exploitation by their patrons.

This state of affairs, however, changed considerably after Independence. The abolition of zamindari, the takeover of land for self-cultivation, the dispossession of most tenants, the failure of distributive land reforms, and the profitability of agriculture after the introduction

of technological inputs led to a sharp increase in the landless agricultural labour force at about the same time as they were breaking out of the patron-client sepi ties. Thus, for the first time this section of the agricultural work force came to be recognized as a potential political force.

Also, there emerged evidence of takeover of more and more land by the bigger landowners, either on lease or through purchase to increase the scale of their operations. This led to the dispossession from the land of the smaller peasantry and also to their pauperization in comparison with the larger and middle landholders.

Yet, of proletarianization there is very little evidence and the increase in disparities has not crystallized into a situation of class conflict.

One of the major reasons, we have found, is the differentiation within the peasantry and the agricultural labour force and the continued influence of, and interlinkage between caste, class, factional and communal factors.

The Jats continue to be the dominant landowning caste and politically also the most significant. This is notwithstanding the fact that ever since British rule

some members of other castes were also able to acquire land. The factional mode of politics so characteristic of the Jat Sikhs has been accommodated to function within the current system of electoral politics. Despite having broken out of sepi ties, the landless agricultural labourers tend to side with the faction of their landlord when it comes to voting or factional rivalries.

Caste feelings also remain important. Landless and poor Jats tend to support the landed Jats in disputes with the landless agricultural labourers, or at best remain passive observers. They are more prone to take up outside occupations and there is increasing evidence of their migrating out in search of jobs. Thus the poor Jats, though deprived, have not acquired a class consciousness and show greater propensity to make use of alternative occupational opportunities outside agriculture. They do not take to working as agricultural labourers even though they may be better off economically as labourers rather than by living off their small plots of land. Traditional considerations of prestige, caste, and division of labour continue to strongly influence the nature of work performed and the occupation chosen.

Because of the availability of new openings in Punjab the landless labourers too prefer to take on

alternative occupations rather than resort to political action to voice their demands. Class consciousness has, therefore, not yet crystallized to the extent of posing a threat to the existing power structure.

Furthermore, we have found that the Communist parties have not been very effective in taking up the cause of the poor peasants and the landless. They talk of working for the poor and landless while at the same time calling for the unity of the peasantry all in one breath. They ignore the fact that the 'peasantry' includes the rich, the middle and the poor sections. More often than not, the Communist parties and other peasant organizations end up voicing demands of the middle and rich peasantry for remunerative prices of agricultural commodities and low input prices and become part of the system of accommodative politics. They fail to provide effective leadership to the depressed sections of the agricultural work force.

Thus, we have a situation of simmering discontent which erupts sporadically at the time of harvest. The disputes are generally settled through bargaining or in recent years the landlords have started turning increasingly to the migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. This further serves to weaken the bargaining position of the

indigenous labour. There is a possibility, however, of this migrant labour turning into a potential source of political action. As yet they are unorganized and do not form a significant proportion of the permanent agricultural labour population. But more and more of them are staying on permanently and in some years from now they could form a politically significant category.

For the time being political mobilization of the peasantry is not very successful. Instead of an increase in class consciousness and class conflict, what has emerged in the recent past is an upsurge of communal politics. During colonial rule we found that economic resources were channellized along communal lines. This process has continued during the present era though perhaps on a slightly smaller scale. And the demands that are being voiced are those of the rich and middle Sikh peasantry rather than of the poor and the landless.

Thus, we find that a variety of factors interact to contribute to the weakness of the forces of class conflict. We are not in a position to rank the various factors in the order of importance. This requires deeper research into issues involved and this we have not been able to undertake in the course of this dissertation.

What is clear, however, is that the poor and the landless continue to be alienated from the developmental process. The government itself has called for the active participation of the poor in development, but has not been able to effectively implement the measures chalked out. It is ironic that the government, while calling for the involvement of the poor in economic development, resorts to the use of the police force to suppress agitations calling for the implementation of the measures designed for the poor and landless.

There are many issues which we have only fleetingly touched upon in the course of this dissertation. An important issue which needs closer attention is the occupational dispersion of the work force and its impact on political participation. We have seen that the Punjabis have been a very mobile category and ever since the colonial period have migrated in large numbers to various parts of the state, the country and abroad in search of jobs. They have made use of the occupational opportunities in the non-agricultural sector and this factor has helped lessen disparities and stem deprivation to an extent. However, not much research has been done in this area and this is a theme which should be researched into since it is a factor which has implications for the crystallization of political affiliations. Another issue that demands

careful analysis is the nature and extent of the migrant labour force which is turning into a permanent feature of the Punjab countryside.

There are as yet many gaps in our understanding of agrarian disparities and political mobilization. We have only highlighted some of the issues which are important and mediate the process of change in the agrarian sector. These issues are more often than not neglected in sociological research and demand greater attention than has hitherto been the case.

Appendix-I

Land Transfer by Punjabi Agriculturists 1874-1896[a]

Year	Total Transfer		Transfer to Moneylenders	
	Sales	Mortgages	Sales	Mortgages
1866-74[b]	88	143	Not Available	
1874-75	79	180	32	119
1875-76	90	204	36	133
1876-77	101	208	37	111
1877-78	104	256	38	149
1878-79	137	286	63	172
1879-80	173	393	51	129
1880-81	144	230	46	105
1881-82	177	305	48	120
1882-83	169	266	44	110
1883-84	238	373	61	165
1884-85	209	323	87	220
1885-86	252	496	68	199
1886-87	410	823	Not available	
1887-88	443	933	134	351
1888-89	438	713	80	274
1889-90	339	591	81	187
1890-91	241	431	48	130
1891-92	303	487	68	152
1892-93	371	549	70	153
1893-94	382	660	83	198
1894-95	321	603	67	172
1895-96	352	607	54	170
1896-97	371	673	74	210

Source: N.G. Barrier, The Punjab Alientation of Land Bill of 1900, Duke University Monograph, 1966.

a. In acres, '000.
b. Annual Average.

Please refer to Chapter II, page 35 of this dissertation.

Appendix-II

Some Basic Statistics of Punjab

Area (1981 Census)	50,357 sq. kms.
Population (1981 Census)	166.69 lakhs
Rural Population	120.49 lakhs
Percentage to Total	72.3 per cent
Urban Population	46.20 lakhs
Percentage to total	27.7 per cent
Density of Population	331 per sq. km.
Rate of Literacy	40.74 per cent
Literacy Among Males	46.59 per cent
Literacy Among Females	34.14 per cent
Literacy Among Scheduled Castes	16.12 per cent
Net Area Sown	4,191,000 hectares
Area Sown more than once	2,572,000 hectares
Cropping Intensity	161

Source: Statistical Abstract, Punjab, 1981.

Appendix-III

Percentage Distribution of Net State Domestic Product at Factor Cost by Sectors in Punjab at Current Prices (at constant 1970-71 prices in brackets)

Sector	1970-71	1980-81*
Agriculture	44.63	36.65 (36.50)
Livestock	15.42	13.21 (16.62)
Forestry and Logging	0.22	0.23 (0.29)
Fishing	0.04	0.04 (0.04)
Mining and quarrying	0.03	0.01 (0.01)
Sub-Total (primary)	60.34	50.14 (53.46)
Registered Manufacturing	4.10	7.05 (6.11)
Un-registered manufacturing	3.83	5.94 (5.02)
Construction	4.60	4.79 (4.45)
Electricity, gas and water supply	0.81	2.78 (1.43)
Sub-Total (Secondary)	13.34	20.56 (17.01)
Transport, Storage and Communications	3.60	4.48 (4.40)
Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	12.00	12.19 (13.86)
Banking and Insurance	1.67	2.45 (2.18)
Real Estate and Ownership of Dwellings	1.50	1.13 (1.05)
Public Administration	2.30	2.52 (2.72)
Other Services	5.25	6.53 (5.32)
Sub-Total (Tertiary)	26.32	29.30 (21.53)

*1980-81 - quick calculations.

Source: Statistical Abstract, Punjab, 1981.

Appendix-IV

Indices of Net State Domestic Product at Factor Cost by Major Sectors in Punjab - 1980-81
(1970-71 = 100.0)

Net State Domestic Product	
at Current Prices	276.3
at 1970-71 prices	153.2
Primary Sector	
at Current Prices	233.8
at 1970-71 prices	139.2
Secondary Sector	
at Current prices	410.6
at 1970-71 prices	185.2
Tertiary Sector	
at current prices	305.5
at 1970-71 prices	169.1
Per Capita Net State Domestic Product	
at current prices	229.2
at 1970-71 prices	127.1

Source: Statistical Abstract, Punjab, 1981.

Appendix-V

Average Annual Growth Rate of State and National Income

(per cent per annum)

Sector	1970-71 to 1979-80	1979-80 to 1980-81
PUNJAB		
Primary	3.8	1.5
Secondary	7.1	9.8
Tertiary	6.0	5.9
Total State Income	4.9	4.1
INDIA		
Primary	0.4	12.3
Secondary	4.2	2.2
Tertiary	5.0	6.0
Total National Income	2.7	7.7

Per Capita Income	1979-80
PUNJAB	
at current prices	Rs. 2,361
at constant (1970-71) prices	Rs. 1,309
INDIA	
at current prices	Rs. 1,316
at constant (1970-71) prices	Rs. 661

Source: Statistical Abstract, Punjab, 1981.

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