CHAPTER – I
THE HISTORICAL SETTING

In the beginning of 20th century some Anti-British movements came into being which had an objective to get India free from the Britishers. Significantly, these movements are named in India as The Gadar Movement, The Satyagraha Movement, The Babbar Akali Movement, The Gurduwara Reform Movement and The Kirti Kisan Lehar. Basically these movements were revolts against the British rule in India. Further, the starting of these movements were neither the result of one circumstance nor efforts of one person or a group of rebels.¹

The annexation of the Punjab in 1849 by the British put an end of the independence of the land of five rivers. By that time industrial revolution had taken place in England and her industrialists were in search of markets to sell their goods and to get cheap raw materials for their manufactured products. Consequently, Punjab was also opened to the vigor process of the British colonization and had been incorporated into the vortex of imperialist market economy. “The strategy of which the British government pursued for the development of agriculture built a strong infrastructure, raised production, but simultaneously

¹ Generally, it happened to be a national reaction of the zealot and brave Punjabis against the social, economic and political circumstances that had been emerged in India, and out side of their country. In fact, during the second half of the 19th century some tragedies happened that infuriated the whole country and became the main cause of starting these movements.
unleashed forces of increasing exploitation of the small and middle peasantry”\(^2\), says Harish K. Puri;

The revolt of 1857 had been taken as a landmark in the history of freedom struggle of India. During the revolt a major portion of entire population of north India including some chiefs and the masses of Punjab participated against the British regime. Some sporadic incidents took place in the region that symptomizes the agitated minds of the Punjabis\(^3\). According to Parambaksish Singh “No less than twenty-two persons were sentenced to death.”\(^4\)

Moreover, Between the Satluj and Jhelum the tribal and rural populations even fought pitched battles with the British. In fact, the cities of Jullundur, Ferozepur, Sailkot and Peshawar were in an open revolt.\(^5\) Both Jind and Patiala soldiers not only cleared the roads to Delhi but also protected the British ways from insurgents


\(^{3}\) Michael Edwardes, *Battle of the Indian Mutiny*, London, 1963, p. 34; At Amritsar, a large number of “bairagees” were arrested and locked up. Many Sikh soldiers were also hanged for their Anti-British activities. At Ludhiana, the local brigadier was indecisive and the town was burnt and robbed by the rebels. In this city, it posed a serious threat to the British Empire, because people not only sympathized with the mutineers but also collected weapons which were later seized by the Government.


\(^{5}\) ‘At Ferozpur a sadhu named Sham Dass collected some followers with treasonable intent’. He was executed and his followers were attacked and killed. ‘At Sailkot even the punjabee military police revolted. Here, treasury was looted, twelve guns plundered and the magazines blown up. The villagers of the neighborhood also revolted and entered the city. Many village leaders were flogged’. ‘Except for the Phulikian chiefs, all other Punjabi princes and chieftains either openly opposed or were looking for a proper opportunity to join the rebellion. In spite of general discontent prevailing in the Punjab, there was no major organized attempt to oust the Britishers from the country. This limitation may be found in the absence of proper leadership. Phullkian chiefs had their selfish interests; with their illiterate armies they openly furnished the backbone of support to the British in the Punjab’. See in more detail, Bosworth Smith R., *Life of lord Lawrance, Vol. II*, Smith Elder & Co. London,1883, p. 53; R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Firma, K.L. Mukhopadhyay Calcutta,1963, p.97; Parliamentary, Paper, 238 of 1859, p.27; and Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party- A Short History*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977, p.13.
during the period when the revolts in the region was in full fury.\textsuperscript{6} The third Phullkian state, Nabha with its eight hundred troops escorted the British siege train for Phillor, and assisted in quelling rebellion in this region. Kapurthala and Faridkot were other two Punjab states which provided two thousand strong contingents to the Government in the Jalandhar Doab.

The fall of Delhi in fact was the turning point in the history of revolt of 1857 for the Punjab. After this event chiefs of rebels surrendered to the British and people were disarmed. May be the war would have been won by the rebels if the Sikh armies under the leadership of Sikh feudal rajas had not sided with the British rulers. By the revolt British Empire did not fall but the East India Company had to go. The Crown British took over its direct rule over India in 1858. Although the revolt could not succeed yet the sacrifices made by the rebels in it became a shining example to be followed by the Indian youth in days to come.

The Kuka movement was the biggest event in the history of Indian politics after the revolt of 1857. It had established itself by 1863 under the leadership of Baba Ram Singh, a carpenter saint of village Bhaini, District Ludhiana. He had resurrected the Khalsa to

drive the English out of Hindustan and establish a new Sikh dynasty.\textsuperscript{7} The Kukas had incurred the wrath of British rulers because they had boycotted English Schools, foreign goods, courts and post office services, preached self reliance and wore homespun 
\textit{swadeshi} cloths.\textsuperscript{8} They established their local \textit{panchayats} for the settlement of their mutual disputes. Instead of newly established schools which had followed the western system of education they were also instructed to send their children to local schools [\textit{pathshalas}] where education in the mother tongue was imparted. They protested against some social customs like female infanticide, child marriage and dowry system.\textsuperscript{9}

As for as the organizational set up was concerned, Baba Ram Singh appointed \textit{subas} [governors] to collect funds for the saint Khalsa.\textsuperscript{10} In 1871 some Kuka fanatics murdered some Muslim butchers of Amritsar and Raikot. In Amritsar case, four Kukas were hanged and two sentenced to transportation of life by the British. In the Raikot case, four Kukas were hanged.\textsuperscript{11} A few month later,

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\item \textsuperscript{7} Khushwant Singh, \textit{History of The Sikhs, Vol. II}, p.139.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Sohan Singh Joshi, \textit{Hindustan Gadar Party- A Short History}, p.14.
\item \textsuperscript{9} G.S. Chhabra, \textit{Advanced History of Punjab, Vol.II}, Parkash Brothers, Jalandhar, 1973, p. 448.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Khushwant Singh, \textit{History of The Sikhs, Vol. II} p. 130: The collected funds were remitted to \textit{Bhaini} by and for the Kukas. Baba Ram Singh arranged for the military training to young men and built up a strong Para-military organization. As the movement grew in strength, its anti-British character crystallized. With the increasing popularity of the movement, the Government began to take a very serious view of it. In turn, having secured the freedom movement, Kukas sharpened their activities.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Parmbakhshish Singh and Devinder Kumar Verma, \textit{Punjab and the Freedom struggle}, p. 16.
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Kukas raided at Maloud and Malerkotla to acquire arms for themselves. All the rebels were immediately rounded up. Leaving to ladies who were released, sixty six of the arrested were blown off from the mouths of cannon. One was hacked to pieces and two were transported for life. The Kuka’s headquarters at Bhaini were searched by the police.

But the Kuka movement left an important stamp on the outlook of the people of Punjab. Some of the Gadar leaders like Sohan Singh Bhakna were encouraged by the glorious sacrifices of the Kukas or Namdhari Sikhs. After the Kuka movement had passed its meridian, moderate section of the Sikh population, under the influence of western ideas, tried to reinterpret Sikhism so as to make it consistent with their modern systematic point of view. There were special circumstances in the Punjab during the later half of the 19th century in which many socio-religious movements were organized in the province.

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12 Parliament papers on the Kukas outbreak, p. 11.
13 Parmbakhshish Singh and Devinder Kumar Verma, Punjab and the Freedom struggle, p. 16
14 Ram Singh himself and eleven of his followers were arrested and deported to Burma where the Baba breathed in last in 1885. During this time, attempts were made by the Kukas to spread their relations with Nepal, Bhutan and Kashmir. But due to the pusillanimity and duplicity of their native rulers, the attempts achieved little success. Nevertheless, a Kuka suba Gurcharan Singh visited central Asia several time and tried to persuade Russia to attack India to help the Kukas to throw out the British from India. During the eighties of the last century, there were symbols of other storms. But with the support of Sikh army, Sikh literate elite and aristocracy, the movement once again became unsuccessful and could not put to make any considerable mark on the British Government. See also Parliamentary papers on the Kukas outbreak, p. 11; G.S. Chhabra, Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II, p. 449.
After the decline of the kuka or the Namdhari movement the Singh Sabha movement was established in 1873, because, a flood of Christian missionaries had moved into the province after the annexation of the Punjab. The Christian missionaries started their proselytizing activities in Punjab with the advent of the British domination. English and Vernacular schools, hospitals and orphanages etc. were opened. The Church missionaries opened centers at the various cities of province. “The British Government themselves took an unjustified and unreasonable interest in these missionary activities. Sir John Lawrence the chief commissioner of the Punjab used to contribute rupees five hundred a year towards these activities”.15 The main objective of these missionary centers was to convert the Sikhs and Hindus into Christianity.16 “In the summer of 1877, Dayanand came to Punjab where he received a great welcome from the Hindus and Sikhs”.17 Later on, the Arya Samaj started the Sudhi movement which was an important part of his activities.

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16 Not only the missions, Swami Dayanand came into forefront at that time and posed a greater challenge to the Sikhs. Swami Dayanand was the founder of Arya Samaj and a great scholar of the Vedas. His motto was “Back to the Vedas”. He maintained that in the Vedas, the stress is laid on the worship of one omnipresent and invisible God and in the equality of human beings. He was a great and forceful orator and his dogmas greatly influenced the people. His iconoclastic monotheism and egalitarianism had special appeal for the Sikhs and his doctrine greatly influenced the Sikhs. See in detail Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p.138.
17 Ibid, p. 139.
In the beginning of 1873, four Sikh students of the mission school at Amritsar offered themselves for conversion into Christianity. This event greatly shocked the Sikhs. Besides, Pandit Sharda Ram Philori, supposed to be an agent of the British, began to criticize the Sikh faith by this time.\textsuperscript{18} To protect the Sikhism, some prominent Sikhs assembled at Amritsar in 1873 to deliberate over the challenges facing the Sikh community and established an association which was named Singh Sabha. Thakar Singh Sandhawalia was president and Gyani Gyan Singh secretary of the Amritsar Shri Singh Sabha.\textsuperscript{19} The main principles of the movement were to remove the Sikh short-comings and to revive the basic Sikh conduct.\textsuperscript{20}

In 1879 another Singh Sabha was formed at Lahore by Professor Gurmukh Singh. A group of educated and energetic men of the Sikh middle class were leaders of this Sabha.\textsuperscript{21} “The Governor of the Punjab, Sir, Robert Egerton, being requested, agreed to be its patron and induced the viceroy, Lord Lansdowne to

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\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{20} The object of the Sabha were the reformation of the teachings of the gurus, publishing Sikh religious literature in Punjabi, propaganda against illiteracy, reform and bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates; and interest the highly placed English men in their organization for the educational activities of the Sikhs. All activities of Singh Sabha were to be carried on in cooperation with the British Government. The movement thus organized herself and rose to great popularity. Many Sikhs, even British administration and \textit{Udasis} joined it. See also Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, \textit{History of the Punjab}, 1799-1947, Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana, 1992, p. 254.
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lend his support”

22 The Lahore Singh Sabha established branches in many towns, sent its own missionaries to the villages, and began publishing journals in Punjabi. After some time these Sabhas met together and set up a General Sabha to guide the smaller ones. In 1883 an effort was made to revive the General Sabha and named it as Khalsa Diwan. With the efforts of Diwan, the Khalsa College Amritsar was established in March 5, 1892, by Sir James Lyall. In 1899, this institution became a degree college.

23 The Khalsa Tract society was founded by Bahi Vir Singh in 1890 and a news organ named Khalsa Samachar was published on different aspects of Sikh history and religion. These were the main achievements of Singh Sabha. Although, the Singh Sabha was not against the British Government, yet the spread of education among the Sikhs made them conscious of their religion and political disabilities. This movement on the one hand tried to safeguard Sikh religion and community from the threat of conversion and on the other hand tried to improve the condition of the Sikhs in the field of education. This movement produced a strong national feelings and emotional spirit was infused against the British Government. With the establishment of Singh Sabha, a powerful middle class came in

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22 The Tribune, 23 October, 1890.
force in Punjab which latter on became a vanguard of freedom struggle.

The Brahmo Samaj was established in Bengal in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Rai. It presented a reformed and modernized Hindustan which could adequately meet the challenge of Christian missionaries. Emphasizing the unity of God and mankind, it projected religion as a universal force and at the same time assisted in moulding a national outlook. The movement, however, could not find much success in the Punjab. Dev Samaj was established by Pandit Satyanand Agnihotri at Lahore in 1887. Shri Satyanand Agnihotri emphasized the ideas of social work and ethical excellence. However, it had a very limited impact on the society. Arya Samaj established by Swami Dayanand in 1875 was another major reform movement of the Hindu community of the Punjab. The Arya Samaj protected Hinduism from the activities of Christian missionaries and pleaded re-admission of converts into the Hindu fold by means of Sudhi, a ceremony of purification. These movements had a direct relation with political affairs and provided a strong national and cultural force base to counteract the western influences.
Before the annexation of the Punjab by the British Government, cultivated and wasted lands were owned by the village community and the peasant had no individual proprietary right over the land. Therefore, it was very difficult for the peasant to alienate the land without the consent of the whole brotherhood or community. The cultivator did not understand the meaning of individual rights of property such as “the purchasing power of the money and “credit and attachment and sale”. As the moneylender could not resort to the court for the recovery of his debt, the cultivator paid to him whenever he had surplus. The moneylender could not dispossess the cultivator on account of the existence of [1] a strong village community and [2] the apathy of the state towards recovery. The moneylender was dependent on his personal influence rather than the state for the recovery of his debt. However, under the British rule, the land became a private property also.

Further, after the annexation of Punjab, the reclamation of desert lands was done. By extending canal irrigation and facilities of marketing agricultural produce, brought an era of prosperity that the Punjab had never seen before 1849 A.D. But this prosperity brought pushed to other economic changes which
radically altered the social fabric of life in the Punjab. Increase in price of agricultural produce was bound naturally to rise the price of agricultural land, and thus, whereas prior to the British rule, the transfer of land were comparatively rare, shortly after it land began to attract attention and its prices rose from average of Rs. 10 per acre in 1869-70, to Rs. 18 in 1880-1881, Rs. 61 in 1890-1891 and Rs. 77 in 1900-1901. The industrial revolution of England had closed the village cottage small industries.

The revenue was assessed and collected with harshness. To pay taxes, the peasants were compelled to borrow money from the Seth or Sahukar. In the Sikh kingdom, it was a fixed share of the crop. The British Government substituted it by a system of cash payment. The Government appointed officers to fix the assessment, value the land, estimate the average produce, average requirement of the peasant for his subsistence, average cost of cultivation as well. The assessment which was fixed by the Government was high and the peasant had to pay twice a year. The cultivator was forced to borrow money at a higher rate of interest to pay the revenue. The

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25 These circumstances forced the people to resort to agriculture that was the only avenue for employment and sustenance of people. During the time of economic prosperity and progress, the population of Punjab began to increase and it was estimated that between 1855 and 1881 the Punjab population rose by nearly 20 percent. See for detail, Ibbetson, D. C, *Punjab Census, 1881-I, 8., 3 vols.*, Central Goal press, Lahore, 1883 and Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 153.
result was a fast rise in the scale of indebtedness of the peasant and consequent alienation of lands of peasants in west Punjab districts. Because in the Punjab agriculture depended largely on the nature. Often the failure of the monsoons resulted in famines. The famines which occurred in Punjab worsened the condition of the peasantry. Due to the scarcity of fodder, the animals died in large number. “In 1869, 3, 00,000 cattle perished in the single district of Hissar”.26 At the time of such natural calamity, the cultivator was forced to borrow money from the moneylender at an exorbitant rate of interest. There were other causes for the increasing indebtedness. The illegal extortions of the settlement officials, bribe which the agriculturists had to give to the Tehsil and Thana understanding and there occurred Sundry and other cases27. Due to all these reasons the indebtedness increased, and the land owners by mortgaging or selling land into the hands of the banias, were being increasingly converted into occupancy tenants or the tenants at will. Between the 1872-73 and 1902-03 the number of tenants-at-will increased by 360 percent.28

The exactions of the moneylenders and the process of transfer of land from cultivators to the moneylenders greatly contributed to the increase of anti-Government feelings among the cultivators.\(^{29}\) The land Alienation Act was framed to protect the agriculturists from the influences of the moneylenders. It was under these conditions that the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 was passed.\(^{30}\) According to Act, lands now could not be sold to the non-agriculturists by the members of agricultural tribes, old mortgages of land by agriculturists to non-agriculturists were rendered illegal except such as provided for automatic redemption after twenty years and the agricultural land could not be attached sold in execution of a decrees.\(^{31}\) After this, the question as to who was or was not an agriculturist was not decided by actual occupation but by the castes. Thus all *Jats, Rajputs* and members of scheduled castes were declared as agriculturists while all *Khatris, Aroras* and

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\(^{29}\) The British Government wanted to improve the pitiable condition of the peasantry. The Government of India was of the view that the restrictions on the transfer of land would improve the miserable condition of the peasants, but its main purpose was political. Because the Government realized the dangers of having unsatisfied peasantry specially a peasantry from which it drew the largest number of soldiers for the army and on whose loyalty depended the internal security of the country. The British Government influenced the rural masses through the peasant proprietors. But these peasant proprietors were being deprived of land by the moneylenders. See also, *In a note of 1895, on the proposal to check Alienation of Land, The Lieutenant Governor, Sir, D. Fitzpatrick, warned that if Landowners were reduced to the condition of tenants or labourers they would constitute “a political danger of formidable dimensions”*. Govt. of India records, *Agricultural indebtedness and transfers, II, Punjab correspondence*, p.2, quoted in Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 154.


Banias were classed as non-agriculturists.\textsuperscript{32} But the act did not provide any concession in the case of Jat moneylenders or Aroras agriculturists.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 gave a new shape to political consciousness in the province. The restriction imposed by the bill offended ‘non-agriculturists’ who expressed their concern through petition and the press. The act was meant to prohibit the transfer of land from the agriculturist to non-agriculturist.\textsuperscript{33} But it did not stop the exploitation of the peasantry. Because after the act, a class of agriculturist moneylenders came into being who replaced the non-agriculturist moneylender. As the experience shows, the former was not less rapacious and exacting than the latter. In this way, the act could not decrease the sale and mortgages of the land which continued to increase and is proved from the fact that as such sales and mortgages increased respectively to 1, 50,000 and 1, 90,000 acres between 1902 and 1906 they increased respectively to 1, 66,000 and 2, 84,500 acres in 1919-20.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Khushwant Singh, History of The Sikhs, Vol. II, p.156.
\textsuperscript{34} Calvert, H., Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab, p.13.
The Land Alienation Act of 1901 banned the Agricultural land from passing to the moneylenders, but it did not solve the problem of rural indebtedness, because the Punjab was visited by a series of natural calamities. Ibbeston, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab lamented in one of his reports of 1907 to the Governor-General of India that plague alone was killing 60,000 Punjabis a week. The epidemics took a toll of two million lives in the province leading to a net reduction of 2.2 percent in the population between the year 1901 and 1911. The prices rose very high due to the absence of the monsoon and the British Government enhanced the land revenue which led to a great rise in political temperature against the British Government.

In the early years of the 20th century, the Punjab became a fertile soil of revolutionary seed. The resounding victory of the Japanese over the Russians shook the belief of the Punjabis in the superiority of western civilization. In fact, the new wind was

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35 Six famines visited Punjab during the first half century of British rule. The famines occurred twice and more than four million people died of an epidemic of bubonic plague in the province. The administration did not care for these disasters. During the famine years, while food supply went down and prices galloped unchecked, the Government did not think it wise to check the export of food grains. Economic conditions worsened further during the first decade of the 20th century. Drought conditions of 1905-07 and recurrent epidemics of malaria and plague caused unprecedented mortality. For detail H. K. Puri, Gadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy, pp. 15-16; Khushwant Singh, History of The Sikhs, Vol. II, p. 156 and Inderjeet Sharma, Punjab famines and the British Policy in the 19th century, Punjab History Conference, 1979, Proceedings (Punjabi University, Patiala) 1980, p. 185.


37 Report Census of India 1911, XIV, pp. 41-42 and 59.
blowing across the length and breadth of the whole country. But the immediate cause of unrest was the introduction of the Punjab colonization of land bill of 1906 and the enhancement of the canal water rates. One provision of the bill deprive them from the exercise of their right to cut down trees standing on their own lands or even to lop off a branch of them, without the previous written permission of the revenue authorities particularly upset them.\textsuperscript{38} The Colonization Bill of 1906 generated political discontent in Punjab. The atmosphere in the cities of province and the affected colonies had become tense. The bill was vigorously criticized in the Indian press and by the members of the Punjab Legislative Council. A newspaper \textit{Zamindar}, was started to publicize the sufferings of the people.\textsuperscript{39}

While the colonization bill was rousing agitation in the minds of the people, a new settlement of Rawalpindi district was made at a higher rate of assessment and also with the occupiers’ rates on the Bari Doab canal. It also led to the increase of tension.\textsuperscript{40} The area of the districts of Layallpur and Rawalpindi particularly were affected. Although the average increase was twenty five percent, in

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\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Zamindar}, 11, August 1905, selections from the Punjab vernacular press 1905, p. 215. Siraj-ud-din Ahmed, a retired postal officer who ran the paper had no pervious connection with agitation or public criticism of the British.
\textsuperscript{40} S.C. Mittal, \textit{Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-29)}, p. 43.
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the case of sugarcane and vegetable gardens bordering urban areas it ran as high as fifty percent.\textsuperscript{41} But water rates had previously been kept lower in these districts than in the western Punjab because the Punjab Government hoped that a policy of kindness would ensure the loyalty of the Sikh Jats who supplied many soldiers for the Indian army. The districts watered by the Bari Doab canal were the heartland of the Majha, the chief recruiting ground for Sikh soldiers.

The discontent over the amendment merged with the discontent of the colonizers of the Chanab colony over the question of proprietary right and of the peasants of the Bari Doab over the enhanced rates of water for irrigation. The political temperature had raised high in the first two months of 1907. Many people attended public meetings which were held at Lahore, Rawalpindi and Sangla. The native press supported their cause and helped to enlarge their grievances against the colonization bill and it soon become a racial issue between the brown and the white man. \textit{The Tribune} and \textit{The Punjabi} were sued for libel for English officers; India and the Hindustan were prosecuted for sedition against the Government.\textsuperscript{42} The agitation assumed a momentous political turn

\textsuperscript{42} Khushwant Singh, \textit{History of The Sikhs, Vol. II}, p. 158.
in the hands of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh and they organized public meetings and published articles on the economic discontent widespread in Punjab.\textsuperscript{43} Sardar Ajit Singh the most dangerous and seditious ‘revolutionary’ toured the principal districts of the province and addressed numerous meetings in the summer of 1907.\textsuperscript{44} By March 1907 the atmosphere in the cities and the affected colonies had become tense. An important meeting was convinced by the colonists at Lyallpur on 22 March, in which approximately 9,000 colonists gathered to protest against Government tyranny. In the meeting, Lala Prabh Dayal read an emotional poem ‘\textit{Pagri Sambal O Jatta, Pagri Sambal O}’ (O Jat take care of the turban). The turban was a symbol of self respect for the war like Jat zamidar.\textsuperscript{45} After a number of patriotic songs Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh delivered lectures at Lahore. Besides Pandit Ram Bhaj Dut Chaudri, pleader of Lahore, Ghulam Qadir Fasih and Chaudhri Shahab-ud-din spoke against the bill. After this meeting ‘\textit{Pagri Sambhal O’ Jatta}’ song was on the lips of the people of province as a whole. The resentment was unlike any other agitation previously witnessed in the Punjab. For the first time the local Government aggrieved a large portion of the rural

\textsuperscript{43} S.C. Mittal, \textit{Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-29)}, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Proceedings Home Political Deposit}, August, 1907, No. 3 (N.A.I.).

population and in response the Chanab Zamindars and their sympathizers organized mass demonstrations. The unrest was not limited to the colony rather it entered to the agricultural families of the central districts. Their relatives in the colony, students, lawyers and members of the Arya Samaj added their voice to the protests. Ajit Singh and his organization the Anjuman-i-Muhibban-i-Watan [society of lovers of homeland] engineered the demonstrations against the Bari Doab enhancements.

At this time Government imposed restriction on the public meetings organized against the Government. Restriction also imposed on the press and party which spread disaffection. Increasing unrest among the people and sympathy extended to them by civil and military native officers confirmed Government’s suspicion that some more violence might come in the wake of present crisis. They extended full sympathy and support to the mutineers who were bent upon perhaps to refresh the memory of great uprising of 1857. Whose fifty anniversaries fell on the 10th may of 1907.46 It was apprehended that the situation might deteriorate after the spread of disaffection among the soldiers because of provoking activities of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit

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46 Proceedings Home Political ,(A), September, 1907, No. 64-72, Weekly report (N.A.I.).
Singh who were very fiery orators. The Lieutenant Governor of Punjab requested to the Imperial Government of India to issue warrants for the arrest and deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh. On a submission from Sir Denzil Ibbetson the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Lord Minto gave order on May, 7, 1907, for deporting Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh under the Regulation III of 1818. Lala Lajpat Rai was arrested and deported on 9th May and Sardar Ajit Singh on 3, June, 1907. Their arrest roughed feelings of resentment throughout the country. Despite the Government repression the opposition still did not subside. Lord Minto vetoed the bill as he was averse to the spread of disaffection among the soldiery. The Government announced reduction in land tax and water rate. On the birthday of the king emperor, general amnesty was proclaimed and Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh were released on 18th November 1907, and they returned to their home province after six months in Burma.

It was for the first time since annexation that the peasantry came into action on the questions of enhanced land revenue and water-rates. The burden of indebtedness also stirred them to participate in the new movement. The forms of struggle generally

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49 Proceedings Home Political, (B), November, 1907, No. 2-9 (N.A.I.).
were public meetings, press statements and articles, petition and resolutions. The agrarian unrest in the Punjab exploded the myth of the renowned loyalty of the Punjabis. The agrarian unrest in the first decade of the 20th century served a very severe blow to the power of British in India because a large number of Punjabis loyalty now could not be taken for granted. It unleashed a chain of revolutionary movements in Punjab. The agrarian unrest awakened the Punjab and the Punjabis, particularly the peasants from now onward were in the forefront of the freedom movement.

These were main events during the II\textsuperscript{nd} half of 19\textsuperscript{th} century and first decade of 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The resentment in the whole country awakened the Punjab and Punjabis, particularly the peasants against the British Government. They were in forefront of the anti-British movements like Gadar movement, Satyagraha movement, Gurdwara Reform movement, Babbar Akali movement and Kirti Kisan movement. The Movements shall be referred to in detail and one by one. It must be stressed that these movements against the Britishers have not been studied collectively so far. These movements had made the 1920’s and the 1930’s as an important period in the political and social life of Punjab. No history of Punjab or India’s freedom movement will be complete without their knowledge. Each movement played an important role to get India free.