CHAPTER VI
THE KIRTI KISAN LEHAR

The Kirti Kisan Lehar came into being in 1928. It was based upon Gadar movement which rejuvenated the party by encouraging militant nationalism in Punjab. The Kirti Kisan Party was a mirror of deliberative condition of peasants, landless and suppressed classes of Punjab. Literally, the word 'Kirti' means 'the toiler'. The party defined a Kirti as a person, who does labour physically with his own hands and does not exploit others. The object of the party was to get free the nation from the British imperialism by using every possible method. The approach led to the search for more effective ways to further struggle against imperialism, feudalism and capitalism, which later emerged as an agrarian movement in this province. Although, it was grown out of the Gadar group but its organization and ideology remained more or less restricted to its mentor. The founders of the party were highly

675 *The Kirti*, Amritsar, April 1926, Bhai Santokh Singh defined the meaning of the word Kirti, under the title of 'Prachalit Bhulekhe' in Kirti Magazine: He explained that it was the exact meaning of the ‘(worker’ Kirti was a person who had no capital and means of production and earned his living by working for others.

676 Williamson, H., *India and Communism*, National Archives of India, New Delhi, 1935, p. 271; (Complied in the intelligence Bureau, Home Department G.O.I., 1933 revised upon 1935.)
impressed by the Russian revolution and organized the party to attain similar aims.

Various factors contributed to the emergence of the Kirti Kisan Party. Among those were: The suspension of Satyagraha movement of February 1922 and severe repression by the Britishers that created an environment of distrust shapelessness among ordinary people and peasantry in the Punjab, Gurdwara Reform Movement and Babbar Akali movement led to the emergence of political consciousness among Punjabis who showed bitter anti-British feelings during the period. The decisive factor that led to formation of the party was Gadrities influence. In the meantime, a large number of Gadrities had been released from the Jails and had settled down in their respective areas.\textsuperscript{677} They preached the ideas of socialism and communism that had been the defining characteristics of Gadar movement. So they influenced the Kirti Kisan Lehar ideologically to raise war against the British imperialism and prepared them to make a broader vision towards world working class revolutionary movement in the twenties.\textsuperscript{678}

Members of the Gadar movement who became part of the Kirti Kisan Lehar were much impressed from the revolutionary


events that took place in Russia and were based upon ideas of socialism and communism. Its prominent members like Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh participated in the 4th Congress of "The Communist International" held in Moscow from November 7 to December 3, 1922, to understand the meaning and scope of communism in theory and practice. The fundamental purpose of the congress was to prepare the ground for the world revolution. The participants got positive motivation and sent as emissaries to India for organizing Indian workers and peasants. While Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh left Moscow for India in May 1923, Santokh Singh was arrested on September 1923 while he was interring in Indian Territory. Later he was released on security on 20 December and confined to his village Dhardeo in Amritsar district. On the other side "According to British informer, five Gadrities Santa Singh Gandiwind, Harjap Singh Mahalpur, Pritam Singh Kasel, Karam Singh Dhoot and fifth one had left for Russia to be trained in communist propaganda." Following this Moscow became an active centre of learning for the Gadrites. They acquired higher education and training in the University for toilers of the

---


681 *Proceedings Home Political*, 1926, No. 41. (N.A.I.)
east and maintained their contacts with Kirti in Punjab through their Kabul Centre. The social transformation which occurred in Russia was personally witnessed by Gadrities and received indelible impression in their minds.

In 1927, the tenth anniversary of the Bolsheviks was celebrated. The Gadrities found that within the span of ten years (1917-27), the economic condition of the people had improved enormously in Russia. In this way Bolsheviks infused fresh energy in the poor workers and peasants and raised new hopes in their minds. Russia hoisted the flag of unity and freedom and gave a call to Kirtis (workers) of the world to unite and break the shackles of slavery. The Bolshevik revolution had added a new feature of hope to realize their goal of freedom from the British imperialism on the lines of Russia. Thus, the Indian revolutionaries looked to Russia for inspiration and assistance. The conscious class of workers and peasants viewed Russia as their fertile land because of its sympathetic and optimistic attitude towards the countries which were struggling to establish national and democratic set up by driving away foreign rulers and eradicating the feudal and capitalistic structure.

---

The Gadar leaders had clearly envisioned that British rule could be only overthrown through the revolutionary means. They had learnt from their past experiences that armed revolution is indispensable to get rid of British imperialism. They had also inferred that major reason of failure of Gadar movement 1915 was non-cooperation among people and unprepared men towards armed revolution.\textsuperscript{684}

Another significant event that played a crucial role in awakening Punjabi workers and peasants was arrival of emigrants (Muhajirs). They wanted to fight Jihad (religious war) against British rule to protect their country from the blind exploitation. In February 1915, under the leadership of Maulvi Obeidullah Sindh\texti{i}, a group of fifteen Muslim students from various colleges of Lahore left India for Kabul to take on Britishers.\textsuperscript{685} In 1915, with the help of some of them 'Maharaja Partap Singh established the "Provisional Government of India" in Kabul'.\textsuperscript{686}

Another group of emigrants (Muhajirs) like Mir Abdul Majid, Shaukat Usmani, Rafiq Ahmed, Ghaus Rahman Fazal ILahi Qurban, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Akbar Khan Qureshi arrived

Tashkand in November 1920. Arriving there, they became members of the Communist party of India, which was formed by the M.N. Roy on October 17, 1920 at Tashkand. In the first instance, they started study at Indian military school at Tashkand later joined the Eastern people's university Moscow. After accomplishing their education, they started to return back to India. On the way some of them were rounded and tried in four successive communist conspiracy cases held between 1921 and 1924 at Peshawar. Of the seven accused who were convicted in the Moscow conspiracy case, Mir Abdul Majid, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Ghaus Rehman later on worked in the communist movement. Abdul Majid participated in the first communist conference held at Kanpur in 1925 and became a member of the executive committee of the Communist party of India. From then onwards he played a prominent role in the organization of the Kirti Lehar Party.

During and after the First World War Punjabis experienced bitter treatment that led to adopt revolutionary ideas. During the war, forceful recruitment was made and unbearable burdens were

placed on the shoulders of the people through coercive methods by the Government. British Government forcefully extracted contribution for funding war. Prices of essential goods had been doubled during war years that worsen the plight of working class than earlier. According to "Bhagwan Josh" at the beginning of the war the strength of the Punjabis in army was 1,00,000. During the war 3,80,000 more were added to it. At the end of the war, Punjabis got only medals and certificates instead of the land and pensions which were promised by the Government earlier.

Another crucial factor which had been held responsible for the formation of the Kirti Kisan Party was 'Kirti' a Monthly Journal. The Gadrities leadership had already realized the need of having independent ideological paper in the Punjabi language which is clear from one of the letters of Rattan Singh from America. He impressed upon Ishar Singh of Kabul centre that there was the need of having a newspaper of their own. For this purpose, it was decided to send Bhai Santokh Singh and Bhai Rattan Singh to India. But in the way, they were arrested in the independent tribal territory of N.W. F.P. Later, they were released on bail at the end of the year. After their release in the last part of the year in 1925,

---

Santokh Singh with the help of two of his Gadar Party companions Bhag Singh Canadian and Karam Singh Cheema started making preparations to launch the monthly magazine "Kirti" in Punjabi. \(^{693}\) A notification was published in several newspapers in January 1926 as:

"A monthly Journal called the Kirti will shortly start publication from Amritsar. The Journal will be the voice of Indian workers living in America and Canada and will be dedicated to the sacred memory of those heroes and martyrs who awakened slating India at the time when the value of the service was for higher than it is now, and whose ideal was regarded by our own people as well as by outsiders, as an absolutely vague dream. The Journal will sympathize with all the workers throughout the world, the entire female sex, and the subjugated the weak and oppressed nations and subjugated India." \(^{694}\)

The first copy of the magazine was printed in February 1926. Bhai Santokh Singh, who was the prominent leader of Gadar movement, was appointed as the editor of the Journal. The Journal bore on its title page the picture of a Kirti placing a garland of

---

flowers on the dead body of a revolutionary hero. In lieu of emphasizing the significance of organized labour, it advocated the revolutionary ideas. It persistently supported the ideas of Gadrities and exalted the Babbar Akalis and patriots who were killed in Guru-ka-Bagh episode, the Budge-Budge riots, the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the Jaito Morcha. It encouraged the peasants and workers to participate in the field of freedom struggle actively. Thus, 'Kirti' became the voice of the repressed workers and peasants. As a result, the Kisan agitation spread out to the whole country.

The Kirti disengaged the working class from the illusions of bourgeois ideology by forming a strong organization of labourers and peasants. The Kirti gave a cosmic slogan "Workers of the world unite" you have nothing to lose but your chains of slavery. Now it had been perceived by the Santokh Singh and Kirti group that the organized working class could break the shackles of India and get liberate the country from Britishers. To fulfill this goal, the magazine wrote in detail in the issue of its April 1927 for forming

---

696 *The Kirti*, February, 1927; September, 1927.
697 The Title page of all issues of the Kirti bore the following Slogan:

; z.ko Go d/fe oshU s/fe; kO 'fj Z fWZ j'i KT

fj; ft u s] kve] h joi Bj hO

j K` s] kwhn Kr bkw h Kdm Kp Vn K e Mm Ki kDr h n K
the 'Kirti Kisan Party' with expressed view. Now they renamed the word 'Kirti' as 'Kirti Kisan' which workers of different profession were included like carpenters, blacksmiths, peasants, cobblers, weavers and others. In fact now the word 'Kirti' was constantly confused with the word 'peasant'. The Kirti popularized the ideas of socialism and communism and played a significant role to organize workers and peasants politically for revolutionary movement. It unfolded the successes of socialist Russia Revolution among the Indians and persuaded the people to stand for the international solidarity of workers and peasants.

It carried on its work while its editor got threats of arrest, confiscation and searches of office. A large number of educated of lower middle class, peasants and workers became the veracious readers of the magazine. After they emphasized of Kirti a Kirti conference was held in Hoshiarpur on October 6 and 7th in 1927 under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Josh. The Kirti informed its readers that the problems of Kirtis would be discussed in this conference. On the other hand, The Sikh League Conference was also to be held on the same date under the supervision of Kharak

---

698 The Kirti, June, 1927.
699 The Kirti, May 1927.
701 The Kirti, August, 1929.
Sohan Josh in his lecture, which delivered in conference, gave a full detail of impoverished conditions of the Punjab peasantry by providing data from M.L. Darling. Some Akali leaders like Darshan Singh Feruman, Jathehar Udham Singh Nagoke and Gurmukh Singh Mussaffir also extended their hands for helping in organizational work of Kirti. The new organization was to establish close links with Indian National Congress and became a part of the anti-imperialist movement. In Punjab, 90% working class was peasantry so it was the organization of peasants. The conference followed the resolution as given below:

I. "For the freedom of India a strong party of the peasants and workers should be established whose aim would be to achieve the freedom.

II. Kirti branches should be organized in every district.

III. Support to the Chinese freedom struggle and Russian revolution should be extended.

IV. Small holding should be exempted from revenue by the Government.

V. Eight-hour day should be fixed for the factory workers.

---

704 The Kirti, October, 1927.
705 Ibid.
VI. Sympathy and solidarity with the Cawnpore mill workers who were on strike."

Next conference was called upon in Lyallpur on October 17, 1927, under the president ship of Tara Singh a local peasant activist. Desh Sewak Kirti Sabha was formed and its office bearers were elected. In the beginning of 1928 it was announced that the Kirti Kisan Party would organize the poor. For this purpose on 12 April 1928, a notice was issued under the signature of Bhai Bhag Singh Canadian and Sohan Singh Josh inviting the workers and leaders together at Jallianwala Bagh, to organize the Kirti Kisan Party. From different corners of the India more than 60 persons including Mir Abdul Majid, Gopal Singh Qaumi, Kidarnath Sehgal, Ram Chandra B.A., Master Kabul Singh, Feroz-Din Mansur, Hans Raj and Dr. Satyapal took part actively. It was unanimously resolved that a party named Kirti Kisan should be established to organize the workers and peasants. Participant members were at the party were considered the founder members of the party. Sohan Singh Josh was elected as secretary and M.A. Majid joint secretary. A sub-committee of five members of Kidar Nath Sehgal, M.A. Majid, Sohan Singh Josh, Gopal Singh Qaumi

---

707 The Kirti, November, 1927.
708 The Kirti, February, 1928.
and Hira Singh Dard was constituted to enact rules and regulations.\textsuperscript{710} Amritsar was fixed as headquarters of the party but there was no provision for change if necessary. The aims and objects of the party were "To secure complete independence from British imperialism by every possible means, to liberate the workers and the peasants from every kind of political, economic and social slavery and to establish a united socialist republic and to organize workers and peasants".\textsuperscript{711}

During that time, the leaders of movement worked hard to strengthen the organization of the party and popularized its ideals and objectives. It was obvious that root cause of the misery of the workers was the rule of the capitalists. Membership was open to both genders. A person must be at least 18 years old and had good faith in the ideology of the party with the permission of the executive committee paying subscription a person could became the member of the party.\textsuperscript{712} In order to subsidize the Journal, members were being enrolled at the rate of 100 dollars each. A general committee as well as an executive committee was formed. The general committee of the party watched the over-all functioning of the party whereas the executive committee handled the work of management of the party and the implementation of rules and

\textsuperscript{710} The Kirit, May 1928; Bhagwan Josh, Communist Movement in Punjab(1926-47), pp. 92-93; see also Sohan Singh Josh, My Tryst with Secularism-An Autobiography, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{711} Sohan Singh Josh, My Tryst with Secularism-An Autobiography, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{712} Meerut Conspiracy case papers, Sr. no. 167, Exhibit No. p. 344 (T), p. 771 (N.A.I.).
regulated. Democratic nature of the party empowered the members of the party to access the records concerning the proceedings of its meetings, conferences, activities accounts etc.\textsuperscript{713}

The powers and duties of the President, General Secretary and Treasurer were transparently allotted. Meetings and conferences were presided by the president. The General Secretary used to keep an eye activity of the party and held emergency meetings of the party. The Treasurer was to keep accounts of the money received and spent, and sanctioned payments.\textsuperscript{714}

The second conference of party was conducted on 28th to 30th September 1928 at Lyallpur City along with the Punjab Provincial Political Conference.\textsuperscript{715} In which Spratt, Bradley (British Communist) S.A. Dange and other communist leader Kidar Nath Sehgal and Chabil Das participated.\textsuperscript{716} Several issues were raised in the conference like forced labour, lack of irrigation water, reduction

\textsuperscript{715}Philip Spratt played a significant role in uniting the Lahore group of Abdul Majid and the Kirti group, by impressing upon them the need of form a workers’ and peasants’ party in the Punjab. From June to August 1927, he stayed at Lahore with Chaman Lal held discussions with leaders of all the leftist groups including Bhagat Singh. According to a C.I.D. report: "On the right of 28th November 1927, a secret meeting of the communist party was held in the house of Shaukat Usmani at which both Bradley and Spratt were present and representatives from Bombay, Bengal and Punjab, including two Sikhs, who were alleged to be on the editorial staff of Kirti Amritsar", \textit{Proceedings Home Political}, No. 18/111/1928. (N.A.I.).
in taxes, land revenue and abolition of *abiana, malia, Chowkidara* and decided to solve it.\textsuperscript{717}

Initially, Kirti party decided to boycott Zamindara League of Chhotu Ram and exhorted the peasants to set up a committee of farmers in the newly colonized areas of Sargodha districts.\textsuperscript{718} Similar was suggested to the peasants of Amritsar district to form committees which linked with the Kirti Kisan Party.\textsuperscript{719} The Lyallpur conference impressed the youth in large extent and they came from far and near to attend it. Demands were made to hold such conference in Sargodha, Rohtak and Rajasthan and other places.

According to Sohan Singh Josh and Bhagwan Josh 'The Third Punjab Provincial workers' and Peasants' Party' conference was held at Rohtak on 10 March 1928.\textsuperscript{720} Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was also participated the conference and delivered a lecture. Sohan Singh Josh in his speech at Rohtak stated as: "What we want is that the question of private property should be done away with. All crimes are being committed and cases instituted simply because there is private property and private ownership in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The Kirti, November, 1928.
\item The Kirti, April, 1929.
\item The Kirti, June, 1929.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
world.” The change in the name from 'Kirti Kisan Party' to “workers' and peasants' party” was pointed by the group that had developed links with other communist groups in the country and accepted their proposal of forming an all India workers' and peasants' party. Sohan Singh Josh writes that 'It also organized various unions in Amritsar like press workers union, motor drivers union and some other small unions.' This party had it branches at Ludhiana, Rohtak and even at Calcutta. In August 1928, the objectives of the party took a coherent and systemized shape which were reaffirmed in Desh Sewak and stated by Sohan Singh Josh. The objectives were detailed as: "To liberate labourers and peasants from every kind of political, economic and social serfdom. It also aimed at organizing labourers and peasants to achieve complete independence from British imperialism and visualized to set up a workers and peasants Government i.e. establishment of a Kirti or Bolshevik type of state which would nationalize land, factories, banks and railways and would cancel all debts.” On 13 to 15 October 1928, a conference was held in Meerut under the presidency of Kidar Nath Seghal of Lahore. This conference held

721 Meerut Conspiracy Case papers, Sr. no. 149, Exhibit No. p. 1468 (1) p. 742 (N.A.I).
723 Meerut Conspiracy case papers, Sr. no. 211, Vol. III (1) P. 295 (N.A.I).
724 Desh Sewak was a secular democratic weekly Published from Jalandhar.
a pride in the history of freedom struggle because it became the base of Meerut conspiracy case trial. Abdul Majid and Sohan Singh Josh attended the conference from Punjab and Philip Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmed participated from Bengal.726 Kidar Nath Sehgal made some elaborations on grave problems faced the country. The workers' and peasants' party was formed in U.P. for the first time. Some delegates of this party were elected for the All India workers' and peasants' party which was going to hold its first conference at Calcutta in December 1928.727 On December 1928, All India workers' and Peasants' Party held its conference at Calcutta with the help of Philip Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmed and Sohan Singh Josh was elected as the president of the party.728

During the years of 1926 and 1929, the Kirtis continued established themselves as daunting enemies of the capital and imperialism and wished to be the workers and peasants' Government in India. To improve the condition of peasantry they demanded that land revenue and other taxes to be curtailed and that land would be confiscated and distributed among cultivators without compensating the landlords so that deplorable plight could be improved. The proposal was suggested to Government to

establish co-operative banks and impart scientific technical knowledge to cultivate the land. Beside this, nationalization of public services, fixation of wages and working hours were voiced. The Kirtis pressed for the reorganization of village *Panchayats* and advocated to include the representation of the cultivators and other rural workers. The *Panchayats* must be entrusted with the authority to assess and realize revenue from the peasants. The instant and immediate political demands of Kirti Kisan Party were: universal adult franchise (suffer-age), freedom to bear arms, freedom of the press and the abolition of all distinctions on the basis of race, colour and creed. The organization did not merely raise the problems of the working class and peasantry rather paid substantial heed towards the current communal tensions and conflicts. The basis principle of the Kirti Kisan Party was that the economic interests of all the Kirtis were common and it was hoped that religion, race and caste, which were regarded as barriers in the growth of the Kirti Kisan Movement, would disappear with the spread of new ideas among the workers. To strengthen the party

---

730 *The Kirti*, February, 1930.  
731 *The Kirti*, April, 1930.
against the evils of capitalism and imperialism was the primary aim of the party.\textsuperscript{732}

It was explicit that there was close relation between leaders of the ex-soldiers and the Kirti Kisan Party but some C.I.D. reports indicated that Kirti Kisan Party undermined the loyalty of the soldiers by the third conference.\textsuperscript{733} It was felt, because of the economic hardships, certain sections of the peasantry who supplied recruits to the army were being influenced by the Congress propaganda in the rural areas. On January 7, 1929 ex-soldier, Risaldar Anup Singh with eight hundred soldiers arrived at Lahore to articulate their grievances to the governor.\textsuperscript{734} They refused to disperse when ordered to do so by the police. Many of them were arrested. In 1917-18 promises of land were made by the civil recruiters but at the end of war it’s could not be fulfilled. It had no belief in the declaration of the Government of invalidity of land for distribution. The far-reaching discontentment prevailed among ex-soldiers of Sheikhupura district and villages of Sahad, Natheke, Toria, Mirpur and Dhamke were pensively smitten.\textsuperscript{735}

\textsuperscript{732} The Kirti, February, 1927.
\textsuperscript{733} Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/III/1929. (N.A.I.)
\textsuperscript{734} Proceedings Home Political, No. 233/1930. (N.A.I.)
\textsuperscript{735} Ibid.
After having manifested the objectives and aims, the activities commenced to organize the Kirti Kisan Party in 1930's, they now had started to implement and execute the programme of party and strong foothold had gained in Amritsar, Sheikhpura, Gurdaspur and Jalandhar. A large number of Sikhs including Gadrities poured in India from U.S.A. and Canada and this migration was similar to those Gadar activities of 1915 which they had executed unsuccessfully to dismantle the British Government by an armed revolt. The returned emigrants included many active members of Gadar Party who returned from foreign countries were: Teja Singh Swatantar, Gurmukh Singh, Prithvi Singh, Iqbal Singh Hundal, Harbans Singh Bassi, Chanan Singh and Bhagat Singh Bilga.

At the end of 20's recuperation in the destitute conditions of Punjab peasantry under the impact of depression and the consequent fall in prices, caused many peasants organizations to came into being throughout the control Punjab. Immediate attention was given to the problem of land taxation. The Kirtis held conferences and launched agitations and protests for the

---

736 The Kirti, February, 1930.
737 The Kirti, March, 1930.
curtailment of land taxes. They also attempted to extend their links with Zamindar Sabha and Kisan Sabhas to widen the agitation and unite them as a single party.\textsuperscript{740} An All Bar Zamindar conference was held at Lyallpur on 20 June 1931 under the presidency of S. Mangal Singh.\textsuperscript{741} In conference following demands were made to Government.

1. "At least 50 percent general remission in the land revenue and \textit{abiana}.

2. Government should declare the purchase of cotton at fixed price.

3. Land revenue should be on the basis of income.

4. Reduction in Abiana, Chahi rate should be abolished.

5. 58 percent of the Punjabi peasants own less than 5 acres, Justice and all fair canons of taxation."

All organizations followed these demands and propagated them but Kirti Kisan Party and radical Akalis were in favour of violent struggle against them.\textsuperscript{742} The Kirti Kisan Party held its conferences in 1930 and 1931 in Lahore and Karachi respectively.

\textsuperscript{740} Among them the most active were the Amritsar Zamindar Sabha, Lyallpur Zamindar Sabha, Jalandhar Zamindar Sabha and Hisar Kisan Sabha, See in more details Bhagwan Josh, \textit{Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47}, pp. 102-104.

\textsuperscript{741} \textit{The Tribune}, June, 23, 1931.

At the beginning of 1931, the Punjab Government was stuffed with imprecise information that hidden plans were being developed for Russian supported invasion of India from the North-West frontier which would lead to wide-spread internal upheaval, especially in the Punjab. It was noted that the Kabul branch of the Gadar Party was constantly making efforts to gather arms, large scale maps of India and her neighboring countries, hatching schemes for mobilization and collecting military information regarding the North-West frontier.743 From 1929 onward, large batches of Sikhs including members of the Gadar Party came back to India from U.S.A. and Canada. On 22 June police ransacked the office of Kirti Kisan Party to suppress the activities of the party and seized copies of cyclostyled Urdu pamphlet entitled "The programme of the Indian Communist Party".744

The Kirti Kisan Party held its conference on 12 and 13 November 1932 at Nanakana Sahib in which approximate 2000 people appeared. The prominent speakers of the party excoriated the Indian National Congress and designated it as "white" bureaucracy by a brown one. They also denounced the idea of bringing independence by spinning yarn. Meetings and processions

---

744 Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/06/1932. (N.A.I.).
were held to protest against the Meerut Conspiracy Case in Lahore and Amritsar.\textsuperscript{745} To get released the Rajsi Qaidi Chhurao Committee (Committee for the release of political prisoners) was constituted on February 10, 1933, for securing the release of the prisoners of 1914-15 (First Lahore Conspiracy Case) and to assist all other political prisoners.\textsuperscript{746} Workers of the party were dispatched to the province for seeking support of the people.

Despite severe police restrictions, May-Day was celebrated in 1933 in Amritsar and Lahore.\textsuperscript{747} A few conferences were also held in Amritsar and Hoshiarpur districts in the later half of the year 1933. Police confined the leading participants to their respective villages under the Punjab Criminal (Amendment) Act. Thus, police continued its expedition to curb the initiations of agitation.\textsuperscript{748} The released prisoners of Meerut conspiracy case: Sohan Singh Josh, Abdul Majid and Kedar Nath Sehgal assisted the party to carry on its resistance. They reshuffled the party programme and strategies and resolved to intensify their work on few particular areas rather than attempting to cover the whole province. The conference and meetings were organized to guide the people for adopting the right

\textsuperscript{745} The Kirti December 1932; Bhagwan Josh, Communist Movement in Punjab: 1926-47, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{746} Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/02/1933. (N.A.I.).
\textsuperscript{747} The Kirti, June, 1933.
\textsuperscript{748} Bhagwan Josh, Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47, p. 110.
way to fight against the Government.\textsuperscript{749} Now, Anti-imperialist League took the control of the movement. This would deprive its powers from the collective affiliations of the various groups at work in the province. Branches of this league were formed at various places like Nankana Sahib, Lyallpur, Batala and Amritsar.\textsuperscript{750}

The British Government was not blind about these developments of Kirti Kisan Party and took stern actions to repel them. In the span of three years, (1933-35) the police intercepted and interrogated eight Moscow trained members and cruelly tortured to extort information about the network of Gadar Party, instructions and training from Moscow which they had brought for their Indian fellows. Till 1935 the police authority had singled out 15 to 20 of the 40 trained communist who had returned to India and were working at different places.\textsuperscript{751}

In September 1934, some organizations of Punjab like The Punjab Kirti Kisan Party, The Anti-imperialist League, The Punjab provincial Naujawan Bharat Sabha, The Amritsar District Kisan Sabha and the Punjab Kisan League were declared illegal by the British Government and consequently their activities were

\textsuperscript{749} \textit{The Kirti}, July, 1933.
prohibited. For these reason, the Kirti has to suspend its publication.

Immediately after the announcement of ban, active members of the above given organizations grouped themselves under the banner of "Punjab Kisan Qarza Committee". Its first meeting was called upon at Amritsar on March 3, 1935 and fifty two members were elected in the general committee. The proposal was offered in the meeting that small committee should be set up in rural areas for helping the peasants to obtain as much benefit as possible from the relief provided by the indebtedness Act. A large number of meetings and conferences were assembled. The Jalandhar District Qarza Committee formed its sixty branches at various places. The organizers amalgamated the agrarian agitation with communist propaganda in the rural meetings.

In 1935, the Kirti Magazine shifted to Meerut and renamed as "Kirti Lehar" and made a weekly. Now it was published in Urdu and Gurmukhi. Its editorial board comprised of Harminder Singh Sodhi, Dr. Bhag Singh, Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, Bhart Singh, Mir Dad Khan, Ram Kishan and Ram Singh Dutt. Till 1939, Kirti Lehar was published regularly. According to police estimate its 5,000

---

753 Ibid., p. 111.
754 Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/111/1935 (N.A.I.).
755 The Kirti, December, 22, 1935.
copies per month circulated and hundreds of copies were posted to Gadar contacts in North and South America, Africa, Malaya, China and Fiji. The Punjab Kisan Committee was formed in March 1937 under the supervision of All India Kisan Committee and Baba Jawala Singh elected as its first president. The first annual conference of Punjab Kisan Committee was assembled at Lyallpur in October 1937 and presided over by Sajjad Zaheer, national executive member of the Congress Socialist Party. The working committee of Punjab Kisan Committee represented all bodies as Congress Socialists, Desh Bhagat Qaidi Parwar Sahaik Committee, The Riasti Parja Mandal, The Radical League and Institute of Agrarian Reform. In first conference Baba Kesar Singh was elected as president, Baba Rur Sing M.L.A. and Bhagat Singh Bilga elected as Vice-president and general secretary respectively. The newly elected body of the Punjab Kisan Committee resolved to intensify the agitation for waiving of the debts, the assessment of land revenue on the basis of income-tax and exclusion of uneconomic holding form taxation. The Kirti had adopted new ideological orientation by the middle of 1938 that helped to develop links with the members of Communist Party of India. The Meerut office of Kirti Lehar became the centre of varying revolutionaries and study.

758 Proceedings Home Political, No. 216/40/1939 (N.A.I.).
circle were constituted to gain schooling with the help of the Moscow trained Gadrities like Harminder Singh Sodhi.\textsuperscript{761} In the meantime, the C.P.I. proposed to the Kirti Control Board the setting up of a combined ideological centre. Although the Board denied the proposal but the Kirti Lehar received the much of the propaganda literature directly from the office of communist party of India and came more directly than ever before under the influence of the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{762} The Kirti Lehar group enhanced its relations with the serving Indian soldiers from the Meerut cantonment and soldiers attended lectures at the Kirti Lehar Office. Later, the desertions from the Army, by a number of Sepoys were attributed to the insidious influence and pernicious preaching of the Kirti Lehar group.\textsuperscript{763}

Meanwhile, the former members of the party raised the current demands of the peasants and decided to launch agitation against exploitation for their natural rights. The peasants were clamorously demanding for increase in water supply for irrigational purposes, abolition of Hasiat tax and reduction in land revenue and water tax.\textsuperscript{764} In 1938 agrarian agitation get inflamed and Punjab Kisan Committee played an active role to organize and to a large

\textsuperscript{761} Proceedings Home Political, No. 216/40/1939 (N.A.I.).
\textsuperscript{762} Proceedings Home Political, No. 216/I/1940. (N.A.I.).
\textsuperscript{763} The Kirti Lehar, February, 1938.
\textsuperscript{764} The Kirti Lehar, July, 24, 1938.
extent providing leadership to all the peasant agitation throughout the state.

In some areas of districts of Multan and Montgomery Government used to invite tenders for allotting definite acres of land to the highest bidders and these tender holders divided these lands among the tenants. After the great recession of 1929-30 these tender holders exploited the tenants by adding multiple exactions.\textsuperscript{765} In protest, about 25,000 tenants went to strike and denied to pick cotton or sow wheat against the tender holders and this strike took the large content.\textsuperscript{766} Similarly in September 1938, the tenants of 20 more villages of Multan district participated and the strike lasted for about a month. Finally, the strike called off when the Government and tender holders were compelled to accept burning demands of the strikes.\textsuperscript{767} After that tenants of 15 Chaks in the Khanewal Teshil went on strike under the leadership of Multan and Montgomery districts Kisan Committees. Their strike also against the tender holders and resumed work after 20 days, ultimately settlement was reached.

The agitation of Lyallpur district’s peasant’s gained considerable momentum on the demands of reduction of land

\textsuperscript{766} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{767} *National Front*, 27 November, 1938.
revenue and water rates on July 1938, when the irrigation department remolded the canal outlets. On 10 June 1938, 15,000 tenants comprising 90% Sikhs marched to headquarters from various parts of the district. In July 1938, the agreement was made by 164 villages of Rajbaha area to boycott of canal waters in order to compel the Government to increase the water supply. But it was terminated on July 29, 1938 for the consumption of human being and livestock in summer.

In July 1938, Kisan demonstrations at Amritsar had overshadowed all other forms of agrarian agitations. The main demands of peasants were: increasing in water supply for irrigational purposes, abolition of Hasiat tax and reduction in land revenue and water tax. It was decided by the organizers of agitation that on 20 July 1938, a huge demonstration was staged on these issues in civil lines outside the canal and settlement offices. On 10 July to prevent the holding of the demonstration, issued order by the District Magistrate under the Section 144 of criminal procedure code banning assembly of 5 persons or more. Despite this ban, the demonstrators gathered at Jallianwala Bagh on 20 July and marched to the district courts under the leadership of Udham

768 Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/3/1938 (N.A.I.)
769 The Kirti Lehar, 10 July, 1938.
770 Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/07/1938. (N.A.I.)
Singh and Sohan Singh Bhakna to present a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner.\footnote{According to \textit{Kirti Lehar}, 31 July, 1938, about 25000 peasants participated in the Jallianwala Bagh gathering.} When demonstrators challenged section 144, the police \textit{lathicharged} to scatter them. As a result, 300 persons were wounded and 145 were arrested.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} Then, organizers decided to send Jatha of 25 men every day to defy the order of 144 C.P.C. On 21 July the grain and cloth markets were closed in protest against the \textit{lathi-charge}. After the arresting of prominent leaders of Punjab Kisan Committee, movement lost its confidence and mobilization of the peasants became feeble. On 9 August 1938, the authority assured the agitators for fulfilling their demands and agitation come to an end. The ban was lifted.\footnote{Master Hari Singh, \textit{Punjab Peasants in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II}, pp. 225-26.}

The Kirtis launched the Lahore Kisan Morcha to fight against the Government for amplifying of land revenue through fresh settlement in the district Lahore before the outbreak of the Second World War. It was the important phase in the struggle of peasants. The enhancement was made at a time when the whole peasantry had been hit badly due to steep fall in the prices of crops and prolonged drought in thirties which had adversely affected the crop
output.\textsuperscript{774} The worsening condition of the peasantry can be accessed from the facts of 1938-39 when scores \textit{Lambardars} and peasants of Lahore district were arrested for not paying their land revenue in time.\textsuperscript{775}

On 23 March, while demonstrated defied the section 144, the 103 demonstrators were arrested on the spot. By the end of the month, 374 persons had been arrested.\textsuperscript{776} To challenge the section 144, small Jathas of peasants were formed everyday to send assembly chamber for demonstration. Usually, every Jatha was arrested under the prohibitory orders. Every day Jathas consisting of peasants marched to the defied the arbitrary prohibitory orders. They were jailed sentenced to nine months of rigorous imprisonment, but continued their agitation until the demands were met. The struggle of the Lahore Kisans turned into an All Punjab Morcha when jathas marched on foot to Lahore from Amritsar, Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, Lyallpur, Ferozepur, Hosiarpur and Ambala. All jathas were arrested at Lahore, when they marching from the district were intercepted.\textsuperscript{777}

The police also arrested and interrogated those influential persons who delivered speeches to vast gatherings of peasants. Master Hari Singh was one of them and was interrogated and

\textsuperscript{774} The Kirti Lehar, 3 September, 1939.
\textsuperscript{775} The Kirti Lehar, 4 June, 1939.
\textsuperscript{776} Proceedings Home Political, No. 18/111/1930. (N.A.I.).
sentenced to nine months in connection of giving four speeches at Hosiarpur district. Approximate four thousand Kisans were also arrested and jailed in the course of movement. Among important leaders who were imprisoned were: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Bhag Singh Canadian, Tehal Singh Bengali, Teja Singh, Dalip Singh Jauhal, Dalip Singh Tapiala, Chanan Singh Nurpuri and Ram Singh Majitha. Ujagar Singh Bir, with the assistance of socialist worker Abhai Chand of Una in Lahore arranged the food and accommodation of the jathas. Finally, Ujagar Singh was also arrested and sent to jail.

The coercive attitude of the Government could not melt the confidence and spirit of the fighters. The morcha carried on their operations very well for five months till September 4, 1939. The outbreak of Second World War changed the political scenario has changed the perspectives of the revolutionary movement. They realized that instead of sending the jathas to jail, we should make efforts to bring them out of the jails. Under these circumstances, it was a wise political decision to call off the struggle on part of the Kisan Sabha leadership.

The party’s journal ‘The Kirti Lehar’ too had to suspend its publication in December 1939 because it was

---

778 The Kirti Lehar, 20 August, 1939.
779 Ibid.
not possible to regular it from the open platform in the wake of the outbreak of the World War.

After it the Kirti Kisan Party attempted to make class consciousness an integral part of the freedom movement in the Punjab in the 1930’s. A united front of the working class, peasants and bourgeoisie was expected to play a vital role in conducting an effective and decisive fight against injustice, atrocities of the Government, fight against imperialism and capitalism. The leadership of the Kirti Kisan’s blamed the Congress for having failed enlisting the support of the masses and convinced that the involvement of the working class and peasants was the pre-condition for the success of any movement.