CHAPTER I

Introduction

The study of communist politics in India has been a favourite subject with a number of foreign and Indian scholars. There are a number of studies on the subject. Most of the studies on communism, books and articles alike, have taken the view that the CPI has been acting under "foreign guidance". They argue that the various shifts in CPI's policies are best understood in the context of similar shifts in Moscow and to a lesser extent in Peking. Some have gone further and attributed the very failure of the CPI to become a significant force in Indian politics to its dependence on foreign guidance.

This one sided emphasis on foreign and international dimensions of communist politics in India was the result of an early tendency among scholars to stress uniformities rather than the particularities of communism in different countries.¹

As most of the pioneering work on Indian communism was done by foreign scholars having little knowledge about Indian environment, in particular its regional variations, they analysed the working of the CPI in terms of its international environment. Indian communism was thus viewed not as an independent political movement but as an integral part of the international communist movement.

There is no doubt that the communist movement in India, in its origin and early development, has been influenced by the international communist movement. It is also true that some of the major shifts in CPI's line, during its early years, followed upon the shifts in the line of the CPSU. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept the view that Indian Communism can be solely understood in terms of its international environment. In fact, this approach is over simplified and tends to ignore the influence of domestic environment on communist politics in India.

A major difficulty with this approach is that it gives excessive importance to the exchange of views and messages between the CPI and other "fraternal" communist parties on issues of strategy and tactics. In fact, it places too much emphasis on ideological issues and implicitly tends to ignore,

among other things, the role of power in the development of Indian communism. Since the instinct for power has played an important role in politics, it would be naive to assume that considerations of power were of no importance to Indian communists. Indeed, while participating in ideological debates the Indian communists were not attempting to fit CPI's strategy to international communist strategy, but instead resolving their factional conflicts and assessing different possibilities for achieving power in Indian politics. The so-called directives from Moscow may thus be viewed as Moscow's assessment of the relative chances of success of various competing groups in the party.

A second difficulty with this approach is that it looks at the international communist movement as a monolith controlled from a single centre. It views peripheral communist parties as satellites of Moscow and Peking, having no independent existence of their own. But this view was not accurate even during the period of Stalin's dominance. It was never possible for Moscow to exercise complete control over individual communist parties. In fact, communist parties at the peripheries, while professing faith in proletarian internationalism, have shown considerable independence in working


out their strategy and tactics. The ideological affinity among different communist parties has in no way led to their day to day operational control from a single centre of world communism.\textsuperscript{5}

With the new developments in the communist world, the dependency view of Indian communism has become all the more unacceptable. The disintegration of the communist movement as a result of the ideological rift between Moscow and Peking and the emergence of China as a rival centre of world communism has led to the devolution of authority from Moscow to the indigenous communist leadership. It has brought an increasing domestication in the functioning of the communist parties and they have become more responsive to national opinion and sentiment. In the changed situation, new and variegated patterns of growth and interrelationships have developed among the communist parties.

Moreover, the acceptance of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism and consequent participation in parliamentary elections has brought radical transformation in the functioning of the communist parties. The mobilisation of support in competitive political situations and winning acceptance from large sections of the social strata has required, on the part of communist parties, adjustment of communist ideology to their respective national settings.

\textsuperscript{5} Kannakaran, K. F., "Changing Communism", \textit{India Quarterly}, April-June, 1974, p. 104.
Modifications in ideology have necessitated corresponding changes in their organizational structure, strategy and tactics. The growing diversity of communism under these conditions cannot be understood except by reference to the indigenous environment of the communist parties.

The above discussion makes it abundantly clear that communist politics in India cannot be understood without reference to the domestic environment in which the CPI had to operate. In fact, if the functioning of the CPI is to be analysed with a view to understanding properly the prospects and problems of Indian left, it is essential that not only the working of the party at the national level but the functioning of its provincial units and their interaction with their environment be studied. The present study on the Punjab unit of the CPI constitutes a humble attempt in this direction.

The Problem

The present study is concerned with studying the working of the CPI in Punjab over a limited period. The main concern of the study is to find out how after the acceptance of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism and in response to the need for broadening its support structure the party has adjusted its organization, ideology and strategy to the

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6. As initially planned the study was to cover the period from 1958 to 1974. But it was antedated by one year in order to cover the second general elections in the state held in 1977. However, we have proceeded backward and forward in order to strengthen our analysis.
requirements of the local situation. In other words, it aims at finding out how the particularities of the regional environment of the state have influenced the structure and operative dynamics of the party.

**Theoretical Considerations**

Keeping in view the specificities of the local environment, the following theoretical considerations were kept in mind while conducting the study.

India has been characterised as a plural society. Its various regional units are marked by enormous diversity in terms of religion, language, caste and culture. This diversity has further been multiplied by differences in historical traditions, styles of life and work, levels of education and patterns of economic development. As political parties perform an expressive function, contrasts in the socio-economic life and historical and cultural traditions of different regions get translated into demands and pressures for a particular type of policies and politics. Regional politics in India has thus been quite different from national politics. Lucien W. Pye has rightly pointed out that “the gap between national and local politics which was not well bridged during the colonial period still remains a dominant feature of the Indian political system.” Consequently, the functioning of political parties

in India has been influenced by regional considerations.

Rotslaff Ralph, for example, has noted regional differences in the functioning of the CPI. He has expressed the view that the working of the CPI has been influenced both by "the quasi-federal character of Indian polity and the regional variations of Indian society." If this be so, the functioning of the CPI in Punjab would undoubtedly be influenced by its regional environment. The present study would thus examine how the regional environment of the party has influenced its organization, ideology, strategy and support structure.

Politics in Punjab has been influenced by religious, linguistic and caste cleavages. Religion has perhaps been the single most important factor in the politics of the state. Moreover, it "overlaps and crosscuts regionalism and rural-urban orientation and injects a dynamic element into otherwise static categories." Religious differences have resulted in a prolonged conflict between the Sikhs and the Hindus, the two major religious communities in the state. Religious conflict between the Sikhs and the Hindus sometimes took the shape of linguistic controversies between the protagonists of Punjabi and Hindi Languages. Caste differences in the state have

8. Ralph, Rotslaff "Revisionism and Dogmatism in the Communist Party of India" in R.A. ed. EV Berrey; p. 16.

manifested themselves in the distinction between agricultural and non-agricultural castes on the one hand and between higher castes and scheduled castes on the other. It has been pointed out by Leon D. Epstein that such ethnic, religious and linguistic differences serve to complicate class politics. If this be so, it would be difficult for the CPI to develop a strictly class based movement in the state. It would be examined how the CPI as a secular and class approach party has mobilised support in a situation characterised by religious linguistic and caste cleavages. In other words, how has the party solved the dilemma between its revolutionary character and its aspirations for mass following.

A strong feeling of regionalism has been another important feature of Punjab politics. Before the reorganization of the state in 1966, regionalism manifested itself in the shape of certain cultural, religious and linguistic differences among the three well marked regions of the state viz. Hill region, Haryana and Punjabi region. The demand of the volatile but minority Sikh community for the recognition of its separate identity sometimes in the form of a separate Sikh state and at others in terms of a linguistic state further intensified the parochial feelings among these regions. After 1966 regional feelings, however, took the shape of differences between the

state and the central government. The Akali Dal, a regionally based party, has often accused the central government of discriminating against the state, particularly in the allocation of projects and resources. Regionalism has thus been an important feature of the politics of the state. Political parties, in order to be successful at the local level, had to recognize this important fact. What needs probing in this context is how the Punjab unit of the CPI has adjusted its strategy and tactics to regional demands and how regionalism has affected the overall policies of the party at the national level.

Punjab is predominantly an agricultural state. The economy of the state is based more on agriculture than on industry. The number of industrial workers in Punjab is less as compared with different categories of peasants. But there is a large number of agricultural labourers and holders of small scale industrial units in the state. We shall have to examine how the Punjab unit of the party, keeping in view the maintenance and expansion of its support structure, has pursued its land and other policies in this situation. Another issue that needs probing in this regard is how in the rural-urban interest contradiction the Punjab unit of the party, operating as it does in a rural environment, has voiced the claims of rural interests of Punjab.

Another significant feature of the environment of the state is its growing economic prosperity. Punjab has the
highest per capita income in the country. Its economy has grown faster than the economy of the country as a whole. Increased economic prosperity has primarily resulted from modernization in agriculture. Increase in agricultural production has given an impetus to the growth of small scale and medium sized industries. The economic prosperity of the state, however, has generated social tensions and led to new political alignments. It has widened the rural-urban cleavage and accentuated the contradictions between the peasantry and the landless labour on the one hand and the factory owner and the industrial worker on the other. An important issue that would be examined in this connection is how the CPI has accommodated and reconciled various conflicting interests in the cities and the countryside in a bid to win support in a competitive political situation.

Overview of Literature

Having stated the problem and the theoretical issues involved, we now proceed to have an overview of the existing literature in this area. For this purpose, we have classified the relevant studies into two broad categories, i.e. studies on Indian communism and studies on political parties.

Studies on Indian Communism

Studies on Indian communism can be classified on the basis of "locale" and the "approaches" they follow. While some studies deal with communist politics at the national level,
others are concerned primarily with the study of regional variations of communist politics in India. Two approaches have broadly been followed in these studies. On the one hand, Indian communism has been viewed as an integral part of the international communist movement and studied primarily with reference to its international environment; on the other hand, it has been treated as an independent political force and analysed in terms of its indigenous environment. The difference, however, is only of emphasis as no study has completely ignored either the international or the national environment.

John H. Kautsky was the first to study Indian communism in the context of its international environment. In an article published in the "Pacific Affairs" in June, 1955, he argued that the changes in CPI's strategy during 1945-54 period were made under the influence of the Soviet and the Chinese communists. Later, he elaborated his conclusions in a book length study. Kautsky's main thesis was that the shifts in CPI's strategy during this period were the result of corresponding earlier shifts in Moscow and Peking. In other words, he argued that the CPI relied heavily on Soviet and Chinese advice in formulating its strategy. But Kautsky failed to


appreciate the role of domestic environmental pressures and factional conflicts in the party in influencing CPI's strategy. Kautsky's conclusions were further corroborated by Overstreet and Windmiller.\(^\text{13}\) It was argued by the authors that international communism had played a more decisive role in shaping CPI's policies during 1920-56 period than its national environment. The strategy of the CPI during this period reflected the prevailing line of international communism. Even the failure of the CPI to acquire political power in India was attributed by the authors to its dependence on foreign guidance. Nevertheless, they admitted that the pressure of national environment sometimes led to factional opposition and even open defiance of the accepted party line. The authors emphasised that with the decline of ideology, communist victory in Kerala during the Second General Elections and constitutional changes made at the Extraordinary Party Congress at Amritsar, there was every possibility that the CPI would make a realistic appraisal of the Indian environment.\(^\text{14}\) Like Kautsky, Overstreet and Windmiller have also taken a one-sided view of the changes in CPI's strategy. The authors have not paid proper attention to


\(^{14}\) In an earlier article Marshall Windmiller had argued that the changes introduced by the Extraordinary Congress of the CPI held at Amritsar in 1958 would lead to a fundamental change in the character of the Indian communist movement and CPI may lose its revolutionary character. See Marshall Windmiller, "Constitutional Communism in India", *Pacific Affairs*, March, 1958, pp. 22-35.
the possibility that changes in CPI’s strategy may have been necessitated by political developments in India and the failure of the communists to revolutionise the Indian environment.

In another study Victor M. Fle examined the strategy of the communist party of India during 1948-59 and came to the conclusion that the line of peaceful transition to communism in India, formally adopted by the party at its Extraordinary Party Congress at Amritsar in 1958, was initiated at the instance of Moscow. But the author has failed to take note of the fact that the line of peaceful transition to socialism in India may have been the result of CPI’s success in the electoral arena and the non-violent aspect of Indian culture.

Similarly, Mohan Ram has argued that the CPI, during its early years, acted under the advice of the British communist party which was itself subordinated to Moscow. Nevertheless, the author has expressed the view that the split in the communist party of India, instead of being a sequel to the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute, was the result of the differences that had existed in the Indian communist movement over fundamental issues of strategy and tactics. The author, however, has not dwelt upon general economic and political developments in India and failed to work out their implications for communist

Manoranjan Mohanty has studied the Maoist movement in India in terms of its environment, ideology, organization and strategy. The emergence of the Maoist movement in India in 1967 has been attributed by the author to the agrarian tensions that existed in Naxalbari and Srikakulam areas of West Bengal. The movement, however, could not succeed because of its ideological stagnation and pre-organizational character. But the author has not paid proper attention to the societal environment in India and its contribution to the failure of the Maoist movement.

In a recent study Bhowani Sen has viewed Indian communism as an internal challenge to the hard pressed political system which has not been able to solve the problems of development and modernization. The author has expressed the opinion that since 1964, the communist movement has solved the problems of legitimacy and independence and has begun seriously to grapple with the problem of identification. The author, however, has not answered the fundamental question as to why the communist parties have failed to solve the problem of identification and become a significant force in Indian politics.

During recent years, some attempts have been made to


18. Gupta, B. S., Communism in Indian Politics (New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1978).
study the regional variations of communist politics in India. The first major academic study of a regional leftist movement in India was made by Marcus F. Pranda. The author has examined the indigenous sources of communism in West Bengal and expressed the view that it was the Bengali search for "a new regional identity and regional political power" that led them to embrace communism. Pranda has also expressed the view that Bengali communists have not slavishly followed national and international communism. But he has not taken into consideration the fact that the idea of regional identity and regional political power was not a matter of political choice and was instead forced on the communists when they could not expand further and were restricted to certain areas. In another study Victor N. Fic has attempted to describe how the crisis of peaceful transition line led the communists to evolve new theoretical and organisational techniques for capturing political power in Kerala. Bhagwan Josh has examined the origin and activities of the communist movement in Punjab till 1947 with a view to knowing why it could not penetrate the countryside. The weakness of the movement during this period


has been attributed by the author to the ideological backwardness of the communist leaders and their inability to declare themselves. But these studies on regional communist movements are one dimensional studies. They have not attempted to examine how the nature of the environment of the communist parties in different regions led them to mould their organization, ideology and strategy in accordance with the requirements of the local situation and support structure.

Studies on Political Parties

Apart from the nature of the communist movement we are also interested in knowing about the state of political parties in India. Keeping in view the voluminous nature of the literature on political parties, we shall confine ourselves only to those studies which are relevant for our purpose.

Political parties have been a favourite subject of study since the advent of democracies. Several studies conducted in the west on political parties have illuminated various aspects of party organization and drawn conclusions which have a universal import. Ostrogorski[22] was the first to point out the "caucus" nature of party organizations and the danger that it posed to democracy. Duverger[23] further confirmed the oligarchic nature of party organization. Robert Michels[24]

23. Duverger, Maurice, Political Parties (Trans., Partara and Robert North), (London : Nethane, 1965 (1911)).
elaborated Ostrogorski's findings and propounded the famous "iron law of Oligarchy". He pointed out that political parties are always run by a small group in its own interests. The studies of Pareto\textsuperscript{25}, Mosca\textsuperscript{26}, Burnham\textsuperscript{27} and C. Wright Mills\textsuperscript{28} have also provided a clue in understanding the elitist structure of political organizations. Eldersveld\textsuperscript{29}, however, repudiated Michel's iron law of oligarchy and found that the organization of American political parties is characterized by a considerable diffusion of authority. He has also found that the need to retain and expand support structure has forced political parties to assume coalitional character. But none of these studies have examined how changes in the ideology and strategy of a party influence the structure and inner dynamics of its organization.

The study of political parties in India is a recent phenomenon. The basic interest of most of the studies in this field has been to trace the historical evolution of political parties and to analyse their organizational structure and working. The parties have been studied mostly individually, either with a view to tracing their origin and growth or to

examine their basic features. The studies of Weiner, Erdman, Kochanek, Craig Barton and Scission come under this category.

A significant feature of the party system in India has been the dominance of the Congress party. The studies of Kothari, Morris Jones and Gopal Krishna have illuminated the main features of one party dominance in India. It has been pointed out that the Congress has succeeded in achieving dominance because it is a party of consensus. It stands for nation-building and national integration through the mechanisms of an open society and democratic politics. In this system the

position of opposition parties, as pointed out by Kothari, is
dependent on the strength of the congress. The opposition
parties were expected to gain mainly at the regional level,
whenever the congress lost grip over the situation.38 But
Kothari modified his views later on and admitted that some
opposition parties have succeeded in establishing an independent
base and their fortunes do not solely depend on what happens
to the congress.39

The question as to what kind of leadership is represented
in the political parties and how it works has been the subject
of a very few studies.40 It has been pointed out that ruling
as well as opposition groups have emerged from a small elite
group homogeneous in social background mainly upper caste and
English educated.41 But most of the studies in this field have
limited themselves to the study of party leadership in legislat-
ive bodies and have not devoted much attention to the

38. Kothari, R., "The Congress System in India", Asia Survey,


40. Few such studies are:
(a) Rosenthal Donald, The Limited Elite : Politics and
Government in Two Indian Cities, (Chicago : University
(b) Jha, Shashi Sekhar, Political Elites in Bihar,
(c) Amija, R., Political Elites and Modernization - The
(d) Sircar, V. M., "Political Leadership in India",
41. Gopal Krishna, "One Party Dominance - Development and
organizational leadership of political parties.

There are many studies which deal with the comparative success of political parties in elections. They reveal the fluctuations in the electoral support of the ruling party and opposition parties and the influence of traditional folds on voting behaviour. But these studies have not paid proper attention to the socio-economic background of the groups of voters mobilised by political parties.

Punjab, due to its specific socio-economic setting, has received the attention of political scientists so far as the working of political parties is concerned. Most of the studies on Punjab Party system have centred around the communal theme. Scholars have attempted to examine how communal cleavages in the social set up of the state have influenced the basis of

42. Important among these studies are:


support for political parties and the structure of the party system. Baldev Raj Nayar's, 'Minority Politics in Punjab' is undoubted the most important work in this area. The author has examined the communal and secular appeals and linkages of the political parties of the state in the broader context of the process of nation-building. In another study Paul Wallace\(^4\) has attempted to delineate the major political orientations in the politics of the state and their implications for the party system particularly its factional aspect. Paul R. Brass\(^5\) has examined the electoral support of different political parties in the state on the basis of some cultural variables and discerned a pattern of dualistic opposition between the Congress and the Akali Dal.

(Frankel\(^6\) has pointed out that green revolution has accentuated social tensions in rural areas of the state and created a favourable situation for launching a class struggle movement in the countryside.) A few articles by J. C. Anand\(^7\),


\(^6\) Frankel, P. R., India's Green Revolution : Economic Gains and Political Costs (Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1971).

B. S. Khanna, S. Bhatnagar, P. S. Verma, Bombwall and Shanti Swarup have also contributed to an understanding of Punjab politics.

But the present study is different from the earlier studies in the sense that it deals with the CPI, a party whose working in the state has not been examined so far. Moreover, it purports to follow a multidimensional approach, as the working of party is to be examined in terms of the interaction between its environment, organization, ideology, strategy and support structure.

**Objectives of the Study**

Keeping in view the nature of our problem and the overview of literature in this area, the following objectives were laid down for the study:-

1. To discuss and delineate the main features of the communist party organisation in the state with emphasis on the functioning of intra-party units, leadership roles, decision-making, communication etc.


(ii) To assess the role of Marxist-Leninist framework in the functioning of the CPI in Punjab and also to see whether Marxist ideology has been modified as a result of the interaction between Marxist ideology and socio-economic setting of the state and the demands of the support structure of the party.

(iii) To examine the various shifts in the strategy and tactics of the party with a view to knowing how far such changes were necessitated by the pressures of regional environment.

(iv) To find out the factors which play negative as well as positive role in increasing or decreasing the support base of the party and to see which sections, strata or classes extend their support to the party at the time of elections. An attempt has also been made to find out the impact of various electoral arrangements and alliances on the support base of the party.

(v) To study the interaction among the organisation, ideology, strategy and support structure of the party.

(vi) To know how far the regional environment of the state has influenced the working of the communist party in Punjab.

Hypothesis

Several hypotheses were formulated keeping in view the objectives of the study. It may be made clear at the outset
that these hypotheses are not necessarily of the type that can
be empirically tested through statistical methods. They are
in the nature of broad research questions that have been kept
in mind while conducting our study.
(i) Our major hypothesis is that regional factors have played
a more important role than in generally believed in the working
of the CPI in Punjab.
(ii) The structure and inner dynamics of party organization
have undergone a change as a result of changes in its ideology
and strategy.
(iii) The strategy and tactics of the party have been influenced
more by the nature of party’s support base and the need for
adjustment with local environment than by other considerations.
(iv) Support structure constitutes a key element in the working
of the party. It acts as a constraint on ideology and strategy.
(v) Organization, ideology, strategy and support base of the
party interact with one another in a significant way. Changes
in one of these dimensions lead to corresponding changes in
others.

The Method

Having stated the objectives and related hypotheses of
the study, we now turn to a brief description of the method
and procedure adopted for the purpose of data collection.
Keeping in view the nature of the topic under investigation,
it was decided to use a combination of field and other
techniques. The following techniques were used for the purpose of this study:

(i) **Documentary Evidence**: A detailed analysis of the available published and unpublished documents of the party was made for understanding the nature of the communist politics in the state. It helped us in understanding the ideological and theoretical formulations of the party and the nature of its activities during the period under investigation. The particularities of the regional environment of the state were documented from secondary sources.

(ii) **Interview**: Simultaneously it was decided to conduct interviews with the state and district level party leaders. The interviews were conducted with the purpose of ascertaining the views of the party leaders on important issues in the major areas of concern for the study i.e. organization, ideology, strategy and support structure of the party.

(iii) **Observation**: Because of the extensive field work done in connection with interviews and collection of documents, the researcher had substantial opportunity to observe the functioning of party units and activists at various levels. Valuable information was gained by sitting in party offices, paying informal visits to individual party leaders and attending informal party gatherings.

(iv) **Informal Discussion**: Apart from interview and observation techniques, the researcher elicited useful information through
informal conversations with party workers. The technique was helpful in understanding the intra-elite relationships, dynamics of party organization and certain 'inner' secrets about some important decisions of the party, that were not told during formal interviews.

The Procedure

The following field work procedures were adopted for the collection of data.

(1) Preparation of the Interview Schedule: Keeping in view the issues under investigation, the researcher prepared an unstructured interview schedule. It focussed mainly on the organization, ideology, strategy and support structure of the party.

(ii) Pre-test: The adequacy of interview schedule for yielding the required information was ascertained by interviewing ten party leaders. It was noticed during the pre-test that the district level respondents with a comparatively short standing in the party were unable to answer some questions relating to important policy decisions. It was also noticed that the responses to some questions were so diverse that the researcher had to face the problem of classifying the gathered information.

Drawing lessons from the pre-test, it was decided to prepare two separate schedules, one for the state level and another for the district level party leaders, with a view to
having a comparative perspective a majority of the questions in both the schedules were kept the same. In order to avoid too much diversity in responses categorization was provided in some questions. Some of the questions were revised to get maximum information.

Selection of Districts

After the completion of the interview schedule, attention was paid to the selection of the districts. With a view to studying the support structure of the party four districts were selected on a purposive basis for intensive study. Some controls were applied to make the selected districts as comparable as possible. It was decided to select two districts which were agriculturally and industrially developed but where the level of electoral support for the CPI was different, strong in one and weak in the other. Similarly, two other districts were selected which were industrially and agriculturally backward but where the level of electoral support for the party was different, strong in one and weak in the other. These districts selected through this criterion are given below in Table 1.1.

52. Agricultural development was measured with the help of such indicators as percentage of irrigated area to total cropped area, yield per hectare of important crops and area under high yielding varieties of major crops. Industrial development was determined on the basis of the number of registered working factories and the consumption of electricity in industry. While measuring electoral support for the party, the results of all the elections to the State Legislative Assembly since 1957 were kept in view at the macro level but at the micro level only the results of the 1972 elections were kept in view.
Table - 1.1
Main Features of the Selected Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>Level of Agricultural and Industrial Development</th>
<th>Level of electoral support for the CPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludhiana</td>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garharpur</td>
<td>Backward</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferozepur</td>
<td>Backward</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selection of Respondents

Having made the selection of the districts we turned to the selection of the respondents. In all 110 respondents were selected on random basis taking 30 from the state council of the party and 15 each from the district councils of the selected districts. It was considered to be a fairly representative sample.

Establishing rapport

After determining the sample frame an effort was made to establish rapport with the party leaders. In the beginning the party leaders were suspicious about the research project and showed considerable reluctance in allowing the researcher to conduct the interviews. But repeated assurances by the researcher that it was a purely academic project convinced the party leaders and permission to conduct the interviews was
ultimately granted. Frequent visits to the state party office at Chandigarh helped the researcher in getting acquainted with a large number of party leaders. Within a short period a good rapport was established with them and they proved very helpful.

Interviews

After establishing proper rapport, interviews were held with the respondents included in our sample. Party offices, trade union offices and the residences of the respondents constituted the venue of the interviews. The interviews were conducted by the researcher himself. Each interview took about an hour and some even a little longer.

Tabulation of Data

The information obtained through the interviews was properly coded and put on research cards. The whole tabulation work was done manually. The percentages, however, were worked out with the help of a calculator. The results thus obtained were incorporated in the study.

The Setting

After stating the methodology, we now turn to a brief description of the setting of our study.

The present study relates to Punjab, one of the twenty two states of the Indian Union. Situated in the North-Western corner of India, Punjab is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the North, Himachal Pradesh in the East, Haryana and Rajasthan
in the South and Pakistan in the West.

The boundaries of Punjab have undergone successive revisions. With the partition of the country in 1947, the state was divided into West and East Punjab, the former going to Pakistan and the latter forming a part of the Indian Union. The boundaries of East Punjab were considerably enlarged in 1949 as a result of the merger of PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) with it. The state, however, was again reorganized in 1966 on the basis of language in the present Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

In its present form Punjab covers an area of 50,376 sq. kms. and is one of the smallest states of the Indian Union. It comprises of three distinct regions viz., Malwa, Majha and Doaba. Although its Northern strip touches the Shivalik Hills of the Himalayas, most of the state lies in the Indo-Gangetic plain. In 1971, the state had a population of 13.55 million which represented an increase of 21.7 per cent over the 1961 population figure of 11.13 million. The percentage of literate population in the state in 1971 was 33.7 and that of working population 28.90.

Administratively the state is organized into three divisions (Jullundur, Patiala and Farasapur) each comprising a number of districts. The numbers and boundaries of the


54. Ibid., pp. 36, 65.
districts have undergone several changes during the past but at present there are twelve districts in the state. The district, with a deputy commissioner as its head, constitutes the key administrative unit. Each district is further divided into sub-divisions, tehsils and development blocks.

Economically, Punjab is one of the most prosperous states of the Indian Union. Its per capita income is the highest among the Indian states. Punjab is basically an agricultural state and about 70 per cent of its income comes from this sector alone. Punjab has remained in the forefront of agricultural production and given the country a lead in staging the green revolution. Increase in agricultural production has been brought about through mechanization of farming, improved seeds and hard working nature of the peasantry.

Industrially, Punjab comes under the category of backward states. Development of industry has not kept pace with the growth in agriculture. Lack of mineral resources and proximity to the Pakistan border have contributed to slow growth in industrial development. But industrial growth has registered some improvement during the past decade. Though there are very


56. with nearly 3.2 per cent of the total area under foodgrains in the country, Punjab produced 7.9 per cent of the foodgrains in the year 1974-75 vide Socio-Economic Review of Punjab 1977, op. cit., p. 3.
few large scale industries in the state there has been a
significant increase in small scale and cottage industries.57

Social and Religious Groups in Punjab

Punjab is characterized by several social and religious
divisions which have important implications for the politics of
the state. Undoubtedly, the most significant social division
since independence has been between the Hindus and the Sikhs,
the two major religious communities in the state. Politicizat-
on among the Sikhs and their concentration in certain parts of
East Punjab induced them to make such demands as would ensure
their cultural and political dominance in the areas where they
constituted a majority. Increasing self consciousness among
the Sikhs as a community found expression in their demand for
the creation of a Sikh majority Punjabi-speaking state. The
Hindus, fearing Sikh domination, were opposed to this demand
and preferred to maintain status quo. With this in view,
they discussed Punjabi language "so that the Sikhs, a minority
by religion, might become a minority by language as well."58
Reorganization and language issues created communal tension
between the two communities.

The reorganization of Punjab in 1966 brought far
reaching changes in the demographic composition of the state.

57. The number of registered working factories in Punjab has
increased from 4741 in 1969 to 7758 in 1977. See

58. Brass, Paul R., Language, Religion and Politics in North
India, (Delhi : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1973),
p. 314.
The Sikhs, who constituted a minority in the composite Punjab, became a majority in the new state. From 33 per cent in 1961, the percentage of Sikh population in the reorganized state rose to 60.2 per cent. The Hindus, on the other hand, were relegated to the second position in the new state. At present the Sikhs are largely concentrated in rural areas and form the main landowning classes. The Hindus are mainly confined to urban areas and thinly scattered in rural areas. The religious segmentation among the Hindus and the Sikhs thus overlaps with the rural–urban differences in the population of the state.

During recent years there has been a slow decline of communal feelings and the process of secularization has been gaining ground in Punjab politics. The ostensible reason of this phenomenon seems to be that economic development of the state has subdued communal feelings. Moreover, the necessity of forming coalition governments in the state has necessitated mutual accommodation between the Akali Dal and the Jat Samaj. In this process the Hindus and the Sikhs have come closer to each other.

Caste stratification also forms an integral part of the social structure of the state. There are many castes and sub-castes in Punjab. However, the most important caste division in the state with important political implications has been the

one between the landowning Sikh Jats and the scheduled castes or Harijans. The Sikh Jats constitute the single most important caste politically, socially and economically in the rural areas of the state. The scheduled castes on the other hand are the former untouchables who are under privileged both socially and politically. Occupationally, by and large, they form the landless agricultural labour and other categories of menial labour. The scheduled castes have always resented the domination of Sikh Jats. Rapid development of agriculture in the state and the opposition of Sikh Jats to the rapidly increasing wages of labour have further intensified the differences between these two castes.

There is a great deal of internal differentiation among these castes but it has no important implications for the politics of the state. Caste and community consciousness among the Sikh Jats acts as a more important cementing factor submerging all differences that might exist among them as small, middle and rich peasants. Similarly, the division between Chamar and non-chamar among the scheduled castes does not significantly influence their political behaviour. There are other caste divisions among the agriculturist and merchant classes but they do not command the same importance for the politics of the state. 60

60. The other caste groups among the agriculturists are Raini, Rai Sikh, Lahana, Kambri, etc. and among merchants Baniya, Khatri, Aroma, etc.
Another important cleavage in the social structure of the state has been the rivalry between rural and urban areas. As is clear from Table 1.2 that an overwhelming part of the population of the state (76.3 per cent) is rural. Despite the vast difference in the numerical strength of rural and urban sectors a cleavage between the two has been an important feature of Punjab politics. Rural-urban rivalry had its origin in such governmental policies and measures as distinguished between rural and urban areas or agriculturist and non-agriculturist sections of the population. Politicization of Jats during recent years in the wake of rapid economic development of the state has further widened the gulf between rural and urban areas. It has disturbed the existing balance between rural and urban areas as far as sharing of developmental benefits and political power are concerned. Rural and urban differences have been further reinforced by religious differences between the Hindus and the Sikhs. Except for a small number of Hindu scheduled castes in rural areas, the rural population of the state is overwhelmingly Sikh and urban mostly Hindu.

Political Parties

Our description of the setting of this study would be incomplete without reference to the nature of party competition in the state.

61. One such legislative measure which emphasized the rural-urban sector was the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900.
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**Note:** The table represents the population distribution over different years, showing the percentage change from one year to the next. The year 1971 is highlighted as it is the target year for analysis.
There are five major political parties in Punjab, i.e., the Congress, the Akali Dal, the Jan Sangh, the CPI and the CPIM. Except for the Akali Dal, which is primarily a regional party, all other parties are all India parties.

The Congress emerged as the dominant party in Punjab after partition. As a secular and broad-based party it has been able to mobilize support from all sections of society. But a permanent source of its strength has been the support it has received from the scheduled castes and other minorities in the state. The dominance of the congress party was, however, broken after the reorganization of the state in 1966. The combination of the Akali Dal and the Jan Sangh, sometimes supported by the communist parties, succeeded in keeping the congress out of power during the period 1967-72.

The Akali Dal is the second largest party in Punjab. It is a regionally based communal party and stands for the protection of the interests of the Sikh community. As a regional party it has always sought greater autonomy from central control. It upholds the interests of the rural Sikh peasantry which constitute the core of its support base. It has to depend considerably on the Jan Sangh and even the communist parties to compete with the congress for dominance in the politics of the state.

The Jan Sangh (presently Bhartiya Janata Party) is a Hindu communal party which is strong primarily in the cities and towns of the state. The overlapping of Hindu and urban
factors has helped it in acquiring strong support in urban areas. However, its seat winning capacity, except in alliance with the Akali Dal, has been limited. Its desire to share political power has brought it closer to the Akali Dal. But the extremist sections in both the parties have often brought Akali-Jan Sangh coalitions to a premature end.

The CPI is stronger of the two communist parties in the state. It has shown better electoral performance than the CPN after their split in 1964. In fact, CPI's electoral alliance with the Congress during the 1972 elections helped it in mobilising certain sections of the social strata in its favour. It helped the CPI in acquiring new support among the scheduled castes and the Hindus. The strongholds of the CPI are in the Malwa region where the Akali party has also been strong.

The CPN, on the other hand, has preferred to remain closer to the Akali Dal. Since its support base is confined largely to medium and small Jat-Sikh peasants, it has to depend for its survival on the Akali party. In spite of the intense competition between the CPI and the CPN none has been able to completely eliminate the other and both have succeeded in retaining their electoral support.

An interesting feature of the party system in Punjab has been that the differences in the ideological appeals and the support bases of the parties in the state have not prevented them from communication and coalition building. In fact, in
their desire to acquire power, political parties have tried to accommodate their differences and show willingness to form alliances and coalitions with each other.

**Organization of the Study**

The study has been divided into seven chapters in accordance with the major areas of concern. Chapter I deals with the theoretical issues involved in the problem under investigation and the techniques used for data collection. Overview of existing literature on the problem and main features of the area of study have also been covered under it. Chapter II deals with state party organization and endeavours to find out how changes in ideology and strategy of the party and environment of the state have influenced organizational structure and processes. Chapter III attempts to delineate the socio-economic identities of the party leadership at the state and district levels. Chapter IV examines the theoretical formulations of the party on important ideological issues. Chapter V analyses the strategy and tactics of the party. Chapter VI delineates the socio-economic composition of the support structure of the party. It also examines the relationship between socio-economic cultural and demographic variables and the support base of the party. The last chapter sums up the major findings of the study.