Struggle by peasants has become an important feature of several agrarian states. It was peasantry class through which revolutions came in China, Cuba, Vietnam and other Indonesian states. In Latin American states like Mexico and African states like Algeria, the peasants' struggles left an ever lasting impact on the national politics. The Indian peasantry has relatively been silent.¹

In India, in 1973, three million peasants were organised out of an estimated 48 million agricultural labourers and 15 million share-croppers.²

Inspite of this tranquil background there are certain states where peasant organisations have emerged and have played a vital role in the socio-economic and political transformation. Among the northern states of India Punjab has played a premier role in bringing the Green Revolution.³

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3. Ibid.
One of the major impacts of the green revolution was the emergence of peasant organisations as pressure groups in various segments of Punjab. Such organisations were conspicuous mainly in Ludhiana, Patiala, Amritsar and Jalandhar districts. Though, initially, these peasant organisations were small in size, yet their significance and identity cannot be glossed over.

There are three types of peasant organisations which safeguard the interests of the agriculturists - Party front organisations, semi-official organisations and non-political organisations. All political parties have their own Kisan wings, for instance Kisan Dais are governed by Akalis, Kisan wings by Congress, Kisan Sabhas and Mazdoor Sabhas by CPI and CPM. Punjab Farmer's Forum or Punjab wing of Bharat Krishak Samaj is a semi-official organisation of the farmers. Apart from these there are a few apolitical peasant organisations which profess to be concerned solely with the socio-economic welfare of the agriculturists. These are Punjab Zimindara Union (PZU); Zimindara Federation of India (ZFI); All India Zimindara Front (AIZF); Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU) and Punjab wing of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU).

Regional party of Punjab, Shiromini Akali Dal along with its various factions is, almost exclusively, a party of the

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As there are number of Akali Dal factions, it is very difficult to differentiate between their Kisan Dals. The office bearers of these Kisan Dals are appointed by their respective party leaders. One of the major objectives of Akalis, especially after the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 and more particularly after 1971, has been to advocate the cause of the farmers. They help the farmers to fight for the remunerative prices of agricultural produce on one hand and the cheap rates of agricultural inputs on the other. They are in favour of liberal granting of loans to the farmers through various governmental credit agencies.

Congress has its own Kisan wings which are generally non-functional when their own party is in political power in the state. They get activated when the political powers are vested in party other than Congress. They are not properly organised. However, they have the provision of one president, four general secretaries and four secretaries, which constitute the executive body of each Kisan wing. All the executive members are nominated by their party leaders. Occasionally, they raise their voice for the various problems of the peasants.

6. Manjit Singh Khaira, Ex-Secretary Shiromini Akali Dal (SAD), personal interview at Chandigarh.
7. Ibid.
Bhartiya Janata Party has also tried to form its Kisan wings but it could not be successful as it does not have any local base in rural Punjab. Moreover, it has also been observed that the interests of the party and that of the peasants clash with each other. These are the reasons that they could not establish any substantial Kisan wing in Punjab.

Punjab Kisan Sabha which was founded by Baba Jawala Singh in 1936 got divided into Kisan Sabha (CPI) and Kisan Sabha (CPM) in 1967. They took up the cause of the agriculturists seriously. Kisan Sabha (CPI) has the provision of one president, one vice-president and some executive members, the number of which depends upon the total membership of the Kisan Sabha. In 1975, the total membership of the Sabha was slightly more than 40,000 whereas in 1976, it went up to 62,231.

Inspite of numerical weakness and uneven growth of Kisan Sabha (CPM), it has the capacity to influence and mobilise the masses of the peasantry. The members of this Kisan Sabha are Jat Sikhs, Rai Sikhs and Sainis by caste. Land question

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10. A memorandum submitted to Shiromini Akali Dal by Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union, Amritsar, July 23, 1979. For complete reference see Appendix No. IX.
is determining factor for them but now there is a radical shift in the policies of the Kisan Sabhas. They have started taking up the issues like that of remunerative prices and the supply of cheap inputs rather than fighting for the land reforms.14 A.R. Desai has rightly remarked "It is held that peasants' question now is not of land reforms but of agrarian revolution."15

Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha, one of the strongest state units of the Bhartiya Khet Mazdoor Union, was founded in village Khan Khanan in district Jalandhar on December 12, 1954.16 It was only at its 12th Session at Bahadurgarh, district Patiala, from 22 to 24 January, 1971 that an amendment was enacted in its constitution and changed its name from Dihati Mazdoor Sabha to Khet Mazdoor Sabha. Initially, the membership of Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha (PKMS) was 15,920. Gradually it grew to 1,28,625 by the end of February, 1976 and it reached one and a half lakh in 1986.17


17. Ibid.
Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha struggles for better wages, house sites, employment generation, cheap credits, tax relief, land reforms and an easy availability of food and other consumer articles, at fair prices. They also raise voice for educational and medical facilities. Peasants and agricultural workers emphasise that agricultural production should be enhanced with the objective to generate more employment opportunities. Master Hari Singh says, "Both the sections are interested that the Kisan Sabha units should emerge in every village so that they could mobilise the entire agriculturists against the exploitation and economic injustice".18

These organisations function as the extension of the various political parties. The activities of these groups are more directly political than articulative and it is very difficult to draw a line of distinction between a front organisation and a parent party.19 Moreover, these groups always look towards the instructions of the party high commands. Unhesitatingly, they forsake the interests of the farmers, whenever and wherever they are instructed to do so. The basic characteristic of a political party is to protect the interest of the various groups of the society and they cannot afford to boost the interest of any particular group. By and large communists are pro-consumers and not pro-producers whereas the

non-communists have always tried to articulate the agriculturists' interest through party apparatus, rather than by their own Kisan fronts.  

Bhartiya Krshak Samaj (BKS) is a semi-official peasant organisation. It is an All India body of peasants with its centralised office in Delhi and having its branches in most of the states. The Punjab branch of BKS is also known as Punjab Farmers' Forum. Union Agriculture Minister is generally the ex-officio president of BKS. The presidents of the state wings are appointed by the Union Agricultural Minister whereas the other executive members of the state units are appointed by their respective presidents in consultation with the union agricultural minister.

Punjab Farmers Forum does not always accept the agricultural policies of the government. Its main object has been to highlight the peasant problems and to draw the attentions of the government towards the plight of the farming community. They operate with the aim to feed back the central government with the repercussions of its agricultural policies. They are not aggressive and hence do not clash with the government. However, they do attract the attention of the

21. Ibid., p. 57.
22. Ibid.
government by publically condemning some obnoxious parts of its agricultural policy. Their mode of operandus is to create a lobby within the ruling party and not to go against it. Though these groups keep in mind the interest of their community yet they do not endeavour to raise their voice against the government with a fear to earn the wrath of the party in power.

The party front and semi official peasant organisations do not have a free hand to function, whereas non-political peasant organisations have always claimed to have fought for the just cause of the farmers. These apolitical peasant organisations have mainly emerged from the Malwa region of Punjab. This region has been leading both in Punjab politics as well as in agricultural production. It has the richest land-lord lobby.23 This region has been dominated by the Jat Sikhs and they have maximum land holdings.24 These land owning Jat Sikhs own 60 per cent of the total land holdings in the state.25 This is the reason that the various peasants' pressure groups have mainly emerged from this region of Punjab.

These pressure groups in Punjab agriculture claim to have maintained their non-political identity. They are popularly known as Punjab Zimindara Union and Zimindara Federation of India (PZU and ZFI); All India Zimindara Front (AIZF); Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU) and the Punjab Wing of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU).

Punjab Zimindara Union and All India Zimindara Front
(PZU and ZFI)

Punjab Zimindara Union (PZU) was a non-political peasant organisation. It was one of the oldest and the most popular peasant unions of Punjab. Manmohan Singh, a cousin brother of Raja Narinder Singh of Nabha (Patiala) mooted this idea at Jorh Mela, Fatehgarh Sahib in 1967. He took up the initiative along with master Gurmukh Singh and formed this union. Consequently, this peasant organisation was got registered in 1969. Initially the union had opened its head office in Nabha but later on, they shifted it to Kansal village near Chandigarh. The shifting of the office was a deliberate action because it was convenient for the union to contact the legislators and bureaucrats from here as this village was quite near to the Punjab Civil Secretariat and Punjab Legislative Assembly. This office also worked as a rest

26. Harmit Singh Kang, a personal recorded interview at Mandi Gobindgarh (Patiala).
27. Registration No. 12, Registration of Firm and Societies, Chandigarh, April 30, 1969.
house for the farmers who came to Chandigarh from far flung areas of Punjab.

Master Gurmukh Singh Sidhu from Nabha district Patiala was the founding president of this union. It had fifteen member executive body. The prominent members were Raghbir Singh (Bhatinda); Gurdev Singh Hantal; Capt. Hardev Singh (Ludhiana); Chanan Singh Rasuldar (Ludhiana); Master Sarup Singh (Ropar); Harmit Singh Kanga, Mandi Gobindgarh (Patiala) and Jeewa Singh and Santokh Singh from village Kansal (Ropar). Brigadier Kushal Pal Singh was one of the advisers of the union. The union had its branches throughout Punjab.

This executive body continued until Punjab Zimindara Union decided to form an other sisterly peasant organisation at the National level. Consequently, in October, 1978, Zimindara Federation of India was formed. Master Gurmukh Singh Sidhu took over the command of this Federation into his own hands and became its president. He enrolled more than 390 members from all over India and also tried to open its branches throughout the country. The executive members of the Punjab Zimindara Union (PZU) were replaced by Raghbir Singh

29. Santokh Singh, A personal interview at Kansal Village in Ropar District.
Siifhu (President); Hartans Singh (Vice-President); Maninder Singh Tigan (General Secretary); Avtar Singh Chodha (Treasurer) and Sherster Singh (Advisor). 31

These two unions had always common issues therefore they started holding their monthly meetings jointly. There was also a provision of calling an emergent meeting at a short notice. The senior most president Master Gurmukh Singh Sidhu always presided over the joint meetings. It has been observed through its literature, that only one man, Master Gurmukh Singh Sidhu had always been dominating in the meetings. The union had also been publishing a monthly magazine 'Zimindar Di Dunis'. 32 It served the cause of the farmers for about fifteen years (1969-83). Various issues regarding agriculture were raised by its publications and the government of the day was compelled to seek the solutions.

The objects of Punjab Zimindar Union (PZU) and Zimindara Federation of India (ZFI) was to boost up the morale of the peasants by fighting for their just rights. Their basic struggle had not been only for the remunerative prices but also to fight against the high prices of agricultural inputs. The union had also been pressurising for including one representative of the farmers in the Agricultural Price Commission. One of the

31. Ibid., p. 3.
32. It had been registered under the Registration of Firms and Societies, Chandigarh, April 30, 1969.
unique objectives of these unions was to get relief for the peasants from the judicial courts in the form of enlisting of cause lists, and to allow two shifts system with a view to save the time of the farmers. They wanted that the court cases should be decided within shortest possible time, not exceeding, in any case, more than a year. The union had also been helping the farmers for getting loans from the co-operative societies.

These unions also seriously took up the issues of the Estate Duty and the wealth tax on the agriculturists. They fought against the inheritance of landed property for daughters. Land ceiling and Land Reform Acts were also opposed by them. They had been advocating the viewpoint of M.S. Randhawa that overlapping of 'land reforms' might do more harm than good. In 1972, these unions refused to merge with Punjab Khetihari Zimindara Union, for their own vested interests and kept their separate non-political identity. During Master Gurmukh Singh's lifetime these unions had a big say, but after his death in 1984 these unions became inoperative.

All India Zimindara Front (AIZF)

All India Zimindara Front (Mandi Gobindgarh, Patiala) was an off-shoot of Punjab Zimindara Union. This was also a non-political peasants' pressure group. Hannit Singh Kang, who once was the staunch advocator of Punjab Zimindara Union, organised the peasants of his area and formed this front called 'All India Zimindara Front'. Consequently, in 1981, he got it registered. This Front had been organised on the doctrines of a prominent peasant leader, Sir Chottu Ram.

The constitution of the Front provided the provision of one president; three senior vice-presidents; three vice-presidents; five general secretaries; five secretaries; five legal advisors and one treasurer. Anybody, on the basis of adult franchisation, could be the member of this Zimindara Front.

Kirpal Singh Gill, Bulara (Ludhiana) was president of the Front, Manmohan Singh Maan, Nabha (Patiala) was vice-president; Chanan Singh Gill, Sangowal (Ludhiana) was treasurer and Hannit Singh Kang, Mandi Gobindgarh (Patiala) was general secretary. The other executive members were Sawaranjit Singh, Batala (Gurdaspur); Navneet Singh, Khomano (Ludhiana); Piara Singh, Morinda (Ropar); Amar Singh, Mandi Gobindgarh (Patiala) and Sarwan Singh, Malerkotla (Sangrur).

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
It is evident from the above executive body of the Front that the Malwa region had been dominating. Subsequently, Harmit Singh Kang gained a pivotal position and replaced Kirpal Singh Gill and became the president himself. An executive body meeting used to be held on the last Wednesday of every month at its headquarter in Mandi Gobindgarh (Patiala). The decision used to be taken democratically. The quorum fixed for every meeting was one-tenth.

The objects of the All India Zimindara Front were to organise the farmers in every village and block. For bringing the awareness, the Front made the best use of its press, available to them. Harmit Singh Kang, the chief editor of the press propounded the idea that at least one-educated peasant should come forward from every village to educate the others, so that a strong front could be organised for the genuine demands of the peasants. The All India Zimindara Front was deadly against the corruption caused due to the short supply of the agricultural inputs. The Front wanted that a liberal policy should be adopted by the government for granting subsidies on the agricultural inputs and agricultural implements. It was also in favour of considering 1960 as the base year. Its viewpoint was that the prices of agricultural output should be determined in accordance with the proportional increase in the rates of essential commodities. Instead of demanding remunerative prices, its main demand was to link the agricultural prices with the Relative Price Act.

42. Ibid.
In 1972, All India Zimindara Front initially agreed to merge with Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU). It also gave its printing press to PKZU. Due to certain strains of relations, Harmit Singh Kang, the president of the Front segregated himself from PKZU. He tried to revive and re-establish All India Zimindara Front's original identity, but by that time much water had flown under the bridge and it could not be possible.

**Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU)**

Ludhiana district in Malwa is considered to be a launching pad for green revolution. Francine R. Frankel has rightly observed that Ludhiana has been at the forefront during and after the green revolution. He said, "No state is more closely identified with the gains of the green revolution, than Punjab, and within Punjab no district is more enthusiastically advanced as a model for emulation by other parts of region and the country than Ludhiana."  

It had the proud privilege of producing 3280 pounds of wheat per acre in 1968-69 as against 1385 pounds in 1960-61 and brought 90 percent of the total acreage under wheat. Where it had the honour of maximum wheat production, there it also took the lead for organising the peasants. In 1972, when

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the Agricultural Price Commission (APC) recommended to reduce the support price of wheat then the farmers of Ludhiana district organised themselves and raised their voice against this economic injustice. The farmers of Khetibari Union Ludhiana along with Mangat and Khanna block organised an impressive procession in Ludhiana on April 5, 1972. They also assembled in large number in front of the then Prime-Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi's residence and gave her a memorandum on April 7, 1972. Similarly they gave a big show of farmers in Chandigarh on April 24, 1972 and handed over a memorandum to the then Punjab Chief Minister, Giani Zail Singh. This spontaneous solidarity of the peasant unions forced the government to retain the same support price of wheat. This gave a boost to the farmers and consequently they decided to organise themselves permanently.

An adhoc committee was appointed to organise the farmers at the district level. Mohinder Singh Jawanda was made its president, Manmohan Singh Hawas Vice-President, Ajmer Singh Lakhowal as general secretary and Harbans Singh Bhookharhi as Secretary. This adhoc committee not only worked

47. The Hindustan Times, Delhi April 8, 1972.
to organise the peasants in Ludhiana district alone, but also contacted other farmers' organisations of different districts of Punjab. They mobilised the peasants by mooting an idea of organising the peasants at the state level. They convened a meeting of the various peasant organisations at Panchayat Bhavan, Chandigarh on May 9, 1972. The various peasants organisations coming from Malwa, Majha and Doaba participated in this meeting. They were:

- All India Kisan Zimindara Front (Gobindgarh) District Patiala, President, Hameet Singh Kang;
- Wahikar Dal (Amritsar), President, Shamsher Singh Verka; Zamindara Union (Nabha) District Patiala, President, Master Gurmukh Singh; Kisan Panchayat (Jalandhar) President, Ranjit Singh Nazar; Doaba Jat Kisan Sabha (Jalandhar) President, Amrik Singh Gorayan; Zamindara League (Hoshiarpur) President, Mohinder Singh; Khetibari Union (Ludhiana), President, Mohinder Singh Jawanda; Zamindara Union (Sangrur) President, Zaildar Ladha Singh and Kisan Union (Amritsar) President, Puran Singh Kang.

The participation of various peasant unions, on the basis of traditional division of Punjab shows without any doubt that Malwa region had the maximum representation. It becomes clear from the following table.

### TABLE 3.1

**Region-wise Representation of Nine Peasant Unions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MALWA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>DOABA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>MAJHA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table establishes the fact that out of all the nine peasant organisations of Punjab the maximum representation had come from Malwa region followed by Doaba and Majha respectively. Some of the prominent peasant unions of this region like Zamindara Union, Nabha, All-India Zamindara Front, Gobindgarh, Khertibari Union Mangat Block and Khertibari Union, Ludhiana played a vital role in the formation of Punjab Khetibari Zamindara Union (PKZU). The head office of this union was opened at Ludhiana. Punjab Khetibari Zamindara Union adopted an insignia, having 'a plough and a sword crossing each other, in the centre of a white flag'.

53. White colour stood for peace whereas a plough and a sword were the embodiment of a peasant and a soldier (Jawan and Kisan) respectively, made for each other. Baba Mohinder Singh Thind and Sardar Harmeet Singh Kang insisted to have such type of insignia. See the Ethasik Tath of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), Op. Cit., p. 3.
Any one could be the member of this union irrespective of one's political affiliation.\textsuperscript{54}

Mchinder Singh Jawanda (Ludhiana) was elected as the president of PKZU. Amolak Singh Guvtala (Amritsar) took up as vice-president, Partap Singh Qadian (Gurdaspur) and Bhupinder Singh Maan (Gurdaspur) were elected as secretary and treasurer, respectively. The tenure of the office was fixed two years. Somehow the elections could not be held in 1974 but in 1976 the same team of the office was re-elected. In 1976 Partap Singh Qadian (Gurdaspur) Bhupinder Singh Maan Batala (Gurdaspur) Ajmer Singh Lakhowal (Ludhiana) and Gurbachan Singh were elected as president, vice-president, a secretary and a treasurer, respectively. Fifteen new members were also nominated to the executive committee of PKZU. They were Arjan Singh (Patiala); Mohan Singh (Ropar); Sardul Singh (Hoshiarpur); Amrik Singh (Jalandhar); Ajit Singh (Jalandhar); Ranjit Singh (Kapurthala); Harbhajan Singh (Kapurthala); Swaran Singh (Gurdaspur); Mammoohan Singh (Ludhiana); Lodh Singh (Sangrur); Thakur Singh (Sangrur); Budh Singh (Sangrur); Surjit Singh (Faridkot); Malkiat Singh (Faridkot) and Dogar Singh (Ferczepur). It is again notable that the maximum participation came from the Malwa region followed by Doaba and Majha. See Table No. 3.2.

\textsuperscript{54} See the Report of the Training Camp organised by Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU) June 8, 1979, pp. 9-10.
### TABLE NO. 3.2

Region-wise Reservation of the Peasant leaders in the Executive Body of PKZU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total No. of executive members</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Malwa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Doaba</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Majha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that there was 60 per cent representation from Malwa, 33.3 per cent from Doaba and only 6.7 per cent from Majha region. This testifies the fact that Malwa region had been dominating throughout.

Right from its conception Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union had been fighting for the following demands.

1. Remunerative prices of agricultural produce should be given to the farmers after taking into account their cost of production.
2. The prices of farm produce should be declared before the sowing season.

For more detailed demands see the Memorandum presented to Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India by P.S. Kadian, President, PKZU. For complete Reference see Appendix No. VI.
3. The shortage of fertilizers and diesel should be removed and their proper distribution should be ensured.

4. Due to unremunerative prices, the farmers have been burdened with heavy debts. So all the outstanding loans of the farmers should be liquidated.

5. Reservation in services should be made on rural and economic basis.

6. The farmers should be exempted from Estate Duty, Betterment tax and Property tax.

7. The loss due to natural calamities should be duly compensated.

8. More small scale industries should be installed to generate employment for the rural people.

9. The agricultural inputs should be provided at reasonable rates.

10. The electricity tariffs should be reduced.

For the purchase and the sale of the agricultural products the union was in favour of single zone system for the whole of the country. It had also been constantly struggling against the Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) for providing insufficient hours of supply and for the higher rates of electricity. When Punjab wing of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) came into existence, it picked up the thread where Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU) had left.  

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56. Such a decision was taken in a special meeting called for this purpose on March 9, 1978. See Bhasik Tath, Op. Cit., p. 16.
How PKZU became BKU

After establishing down, Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union started spreading its activities out of Punjab. It started visiting the neighbouring states. To study the plight of the peasants. In a way they wanted to create a strong and consolidated peasant organisation. Moore also emphasises that peasant solidarity is a necessary condition for political action.57 Ajmer Singh Lakhowal was sent to study the Kanjawala agitation of the farmers.58 The purpose of going there was to establish the contacts with the farmer volunteers, coming from Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, a three member committee59 was sent to study the farmers' organisation in Tamil Nadu, where eight farmers had laid down their lives in an agitation. PKZU gave Rs.8000 to the family of the victims who had laid down their lives for the noble cause of the farmers.

It also rendered full support to the Kanjawala Agitation by sending large groups of farmers for courting arrests. The first arrest was given under the leadership of Balbir Singh Rajewal on September 25, 1978 and after that the regular groups of volunteers started following from Punjab.60

59. Three member committee consisted of Bhupinder Singh Maan, Balbir Singh Rajewal & Gurbachan Singh Bhomian.
This friendly gesture of the farmers of Punjab bore fruits, when under the leadership of Chaudhary Mange Ram Malik, 'A Farmers Organisation' was established in Haryana and Dr. Ranjit Singh Khekara from Muzzaffarnagar came forward to organise the peasants in Uttar Pradesh. When C. Narainan Swami Naidu, a popular peasant leader of Tamil Nadu was arrested, then all the farmers organisations from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi assembled in large number in front of the Tamil Nadu House in Delhi. They protested against the arrest of C. Narainan Swami Naidu and pressurised the government for his release.

During Janata party regime in the Centre, Chaudhary Charan Singh had emerged as the most popular peasant leader. He wanted to create an effective peasants lobby at the centre. Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union gave a wholehearted support to Chaudhary Charan Singh and tried to strengthen his hands. He was a constant source of inspiration for the farmers.

When the Union learnt that the farmers of other states do not relish the name 'Zimindara' they decided immediately, 

61. Shri C. Narainan Swami Naidu was arrested under the National Security Act. See Indian Express Delhi, May 21, 1979.


63. A Memorandum was passed by Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union on June 26, 1978. For ready reference see Appendix No. VIII.
in a meeting on February 24, 1980, to give up the word 'Zimindara'. For the larger interest of the farmers, the name of the union was changed from Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union to Punjab Khetibari Union. Punjab Khetibari Union, invited the farmers’ organisations from Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kamataka and Tamil Nadu to Punjab in September, 1980. C. Narainan Swami Naidu from Tamil Nadu, Major Ishwar Singh Tyagi from Haryana and many other peasant leaders addressed a big gathering of the farmers in Sangrur and Ferozepur districts. This gave, an other opportunity to the farmers for coming close to each other by understanding their mutual problems.

On December 14, 1980, an All India Convention of the farmers was held in the Institute of Engineers, Hyderabad. The sole interest of the Punjab Khetibari Union was to bring the Indian farmers to a common platform. Its dream got fulfilled when an Indian Farmers Association was formed at the national level in Hyderabad. C. Narainan Swami was

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64. Such an objection came from the peasant organisations of Assam, Bihar and some other southern states of India.


66. In Sangrur, the rally was addressed on September 17, 1980 and in Ferozepur it was done on September 19, 1980. See The Tribune September 18 and September 20, 1980.

67. The farmers were also permitted to translate the name 'Indian Farmers Association' into their own regional languages.
nominated as the President of the Union. H.S. Rudrappa from Karnataka and Major Ishwar Dyal Tyagi from Haryana were elected as Vice-Presidents. Balbir Singh Rajewal from Punjab and Dr. Ranjit Singh were elected as general secretaries.

It was decided to have a flag of the union, having a green border leaving in the centre the white portion meant for the peasants' picture ploughing the field. Earlier this was the flag of peasants organisation of Tamil Nadu. 

Immediately after this decision, the farmers of Northern India met together in a common meeting and decided to call Indian Farmers Association as Bhartiya Kisan Union for the whole of Northern India. This is how Bhartiya Kisan Union (EKU) came into existence on December 14, 1980. 

The main feature of this organisation was that it was non-political peasant organisation with an object to watch the interests of the farmers. To strengthen the union at the national level, many conferences were held in various states. In Punjab, G. Narainan Swami was invited in Hoshiarpur and was given a warm welcome by a large gathering of the farmers on January 20, 1982.

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All the delegates of the Bhartiya Kisan Union were invited in Madras to celebrate the 'Kisan Day' on July 5, 1982. On reaching Madras, the delegates found that C. Narainan Swami had planned to form a political party under the garb of the 'Indian Farmers Association'. This was basically against the norms of the Association. All the states from the North opposed this move vehemently and removed C. Narainan Swami Naidu from the presidency of the union. Immediately, Major Ishwar Dyal Tyagi was appointed as the President till the next elections.

To be more precise, in South the farmers' associations were called 'Indian Farmers Association' and in the North it became popular with the name of 'Bhartiya Kisan Union'. In Punjab wing of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), Bhupinder Singh Maan was elected as the President, Bhogor Singh (Ferozepur), Pyara Singh Dhanola (Sangrur) and Charanjit Singh (Amritsar) were elected as the Vice-Presidents of the Union. Ajmer Singh Lakhowal and Ajaib Singh Khera were elected as the General Secretaries and Balbir Singh Rajewal was elected Secretary Publicity as well as Secretary at national level.

Virtually there was a change in the nomenclature. Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union (PKZU) started being known as Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU). But for some minor changes the basic composition, organisation and objectives of the union remained almost the same.

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71. This election was held on June 15, 1981. See Ethasik Tath of Bhartiya Kisan Union, Op. Cit., p. 24.
Rules and Regulations of Punjab Khetibari Zamindara Union, as amended in February 1976 and then in 1978 delineate the organisational structure of the union for the village, block, district and state level organisation. In 1983, Bhartiya Kisan Union issued a booklet\(^72\) according to which the organisation of the Union is as detailed below:

**Village Unit**

Village is considered as the basic unit of the union. Each unit has at least twenty five members. These members elect an executive body, comprising of a president, vice-president, secretary, assistant secretary and a cashier. The executive body can also nominate two members from the primary members of the village as advisor to the executive body. The village unit also sends one member after every twenty five members to the block unit. But each village cannot send more than four members to the block unit.

**Block Committee**

The representatives sent by all the villages in a block are the members of a block committee of the Union. It has an executive body which consists of one president, two vice-presidents, one secretary, one assistant secretary, one

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propaganda secretary and one cashier. Other than these, mere executive members are elected. Thus, there are 21 members in the executive body of Block Committee. It has the power to nominate 3 members as advisors or special invitees. The block committee also elects 10 delegates for the district committee and one member for the state committee.

**District Committee**

Ten delegates sent by each block for a district unit of the Union comprises the Zila Committee or district committee. The district committee consists of one president, three vice-presidents, two general secretaries, one secretary, one propaganda secretary and a finance secretary. Apart from these nine-office-bearers there are ten more members of the executive committee, which are elected from the delegates of the district house committee.

In addition, every block unit president is ex-officio member of the district committee. The district executive committee is also empowered to nominate six more delegates as the special invitees or advisors. Thus in all there are total twenty-five members in the district executive body.

**State Committee**

The general house of the state committee of the union has members from each district which elects one delegate from
each block for sending them to the state committee. Thus the total delegates coming from a district are equal to the total blocks under that particular district. Presidents of all the district units are the members of the state committee.

There are 35 members in the state executive, including eleven office-bearers. There are one president, three vice-presidents, two general secretaries, one propaganda secretary and one cashier. The executive committee is also empowered to nominate ten members as the special invitees or the advisors to state executive committee.

Membership:

The primary membership of the union can be sought by any person who is a farmer, tiller tenant, agricultural labourer or a landlord. In a nutshell, any man or woman who is directly or indirectly dependent upon the agricultural profession can be the member of this union provided he accepts its programmes, objectives, rules and regulations. Though the union provides the primary membership to all the agriculturists yet it prohibits any post of an office-bearer for any political leader.

FINANCES OF THE UNION:

The union fixed Rs. 2 for an ordinary annual membership and Rs. 50 for life membership. "Whenever the union leaders
feel insufficiency of funds in the account of the union, they make an appeal to the members of the union and they always come forward to contribute through donations". 73

The annual membership fee is distributed in such a way "so that 40 per cent goes to block committee; 40 per cent to district committee and 20 per cent to the state committee.

All district units are to pay 10 per cent of their collections and donations to the state committee. The whole account of life membership goes to the state committee". 74

Tenure:

The tenure for every office bearer of the unit is two years. There is also a provision for getting re-elected to the same post.

Quorum:

The quorum has been fixed as one third of the total members of the house. This is true for both general body and executive committee meetings. Meetings adjourned for want of complete quorum can be reconvened with proper notice.

It is interesting to know that no quorum is required for such a meeting.

74. Ibid.
Meetings:

The secretary of the union, with its president's consent can convene a general body meeting at least with 10 days notice. Similarly, for executive committee meeting at least six days notice is required, but in case of some special meeting, both the houses i.e. general body and executive committee can be summoned with a short notice of 48 hours. In routine, at least two general body meetings must be held in a year. If it appears that secretary or president is not calling the meeting deliberately, then at least 15 members of the general body can pass a resolution for the meeting and they can do so with at least 10 days notice to the president of the union.

The state level meetings used to be held on the 15th of every month* at its headquarters. It has been observed that the union had been changing the venue and date of its meeting during the course of agitations.** District committee meetings are also held every month and the venue is fixed in consultation with the delegates from the blocks. Though

* Now the state level meetings are held on the 20th of every month.

** The State Committee held its monthly meeting at Chandigarh on 15th March, 1983 when it was sitting on Dharma during the course of Budget Session of Punjab Assembly. Similarly on 18th May, 1983 the monthly meeting was held at Mansa tehsil because union agitation was going on against the realisation of amounts from the farmers for bricklining the water courses.
there is a provision in the constitution of the union that Block Committee will be meeting at least once a month at any common place,* but it has been observed that block level meetings are more regular, particularly during the course of agitations.

**Objects of the Union**

The objects of the union have been mentioned in the brochure of the Union.**75 These objects are:**

- To get the hospitals, colleges, post-offices, telephones and other facilities for rural people in proportion to their population.
- To get reservations in services, professional colleges and other educational institutions according to the rural population which is 82 per cent.
- To get industrial facilities for agriculture.
- To get the rural areas industrialised so as to remove burden on agriculture.
- To fight against poverty and for socialism.
- To abolish corruption, adulteration, quota system, import and export system, licensing system, inefficiency, ignorance and smuggling.
- To get the maximum and minimum income fixed at the national level.
- For the agricultural lands acquired for setting up factories or other development works, 25 per cent more

* Generally a common place is considered the premises of market committee or in the grain market.  

price should be paid than the market rate so that the burden of the development is born by the whole nation instead of poor farmers alone.

- To bring down the prices of the fertilizers, tractors, diesel, pesticides, insecticides, bricks, cement, steel, cloth etc.

- To get the reservation in services separated on the basis of population for rural and urban scheduled castes because the benefit of reservation at this stage is availed of by the urban scheduled caste only.

- The whole income of the market committees and income of municipal committees and octroi should be spent on the rural areas for their development.

- In the name of socialism, ceiling on agricultural land has been imposed 'three times'. No ceiling has ever been imposed on industry, business, commerce, import and export business, incomes of bureaucracy and other sources of income. So, a ceiling should be imposed on them. To get the definition of a family implemented in other occupations as specified in the Agriculture Land Ceiling Act, 1972.

- To educate rural people not to spend lavishly on marriages, births and deaths etc. and preach prohibition.

- To give a respectable social status to the women in society.

- To get the prices of agricultural produce linked with the prices of agricultural inputs, consumer goods, and price index 1967-68 as base year.
- To save farmers from their loot in the Improvement Trusts and to stop corruption and profiteering by the middle men.

- To get the representatives of the Union and the Agricultural University (Ludhiana) appointed on the Agricultural Prices Commission.

- To get the procurement prices of agricultural produce declared by the government before sowing season.

- Every farmer should be provided with an identity card duly attested by the tehsildar. It should contain the record of ownership and mortgaged land etc. Similarly, commission agents should also issue a pass-book having details of their accounts. It should also contain the price paid for the farm produce and details of advance given by the commission agents to the farmer.

- As ceiling has been imposed on the agricultural land several times, so there should be no Estate duty, Wealth tax, Betterment tax, etc. on agriculture.

- Peasants owning below 10 acres should be given inputs on concessional rates.

- Farmers owning below 10 acres should be allotted more land to make it a unit of 10 acres, to enable them to keep their occupation going on.

- To get the full fees of the children of farmers owning upto 10 acres of land remitted and scholarship for the children of farmers owning land upto 5 acres.

- To get interest free loans for poultry, piggery and dairy farming for the farmers owning land upto 5 acres.
To get old age pension to the farmers owning upto 5 acres of land at the age of 58 years and also such physically handicapped as have been the victims in the accidents caused by agricultural machinery.

TABLE NO. 3.3
Classification of the Demands of Bhartiya Kisan Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Demands</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>General demands for the rural development.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Specific demands for the peasants.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Demands for poor peasants, having 5 to 10 acres.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On examining the charter of demands carefully, it is found that out of 25 demands, 14 demands are related to the general welfare of the rural people and their development, whereas only 5 demands are directly related to the agriculturists, particularly the peasants. The remaining 5 demands have been reserved for those who are poor and have only 5 to 10 acres of land holdings.
The above Table 3.3 shows that the union's endeavour was to create a broad base for agitations against the government. Although 56 per cent demands were general in nature but no specific agitation was ever organised for these demands. Almost all the agitations of the Union had been revolving around the specific demands of the peasants. Precisely, the union had been fighting for the cause of the peasants in particular and that of the agriculturists in general. This becomes more vivid in the following chapter.