Chapter-V (Part-I)

Struggle Against the Mis-Rule of Princely States
(1920-48)
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Social Reform Movements

The last quarter of nineteenth century and the early twentieth century is also marked by the establishment of non-official organizations in the Himachal Pradesh for the removal of social evils and redressal of the people’s grievances. The Congress agitation in the British India and the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi at the political scene of India, had its own repercussions on the state people’s movement. In spite of the oppressive rule and the ruthless tyranny of the Indian princes, the hill people decided to stand on their own feet. They started their work by setting-up Sewa Samitis, Hitkari Sabhas, night schools, reading rooms and circulating libraries. Every opportunity was availed of for creating public opinion against the oppressive laws and personal rule of the princes.¹

Among the most important social reform organizations, mention may be made of the Rajput and Brahmin Sabhas, Sanatan Dharma and Arya Samaj Sabhas, Sewak Sanghas, Sudhar Sammelans, Prem Sabhas and Sewa Samities, which were mostly formed in second quarter of the twentieth century. These associations undertook to launch campaigns to eradicate evil practices such as reet, untouchability and child marriage and to encourage widow remarriage.
I. Reet/Rit

Attempts were made by some of the Simla Hill States and many adjoining territories such as Mandi and Kullu, to put an end to the custom of 'Reet' or 'Rit' by legislation. Being alarmed at the evil results of this custom of 'Reet' some social reformers and public associations of the hills started vigorous propaganda for its abolition. The Rajput Sthaniya Sabha, the Himalaya Vidiya Prabandhani Sabha and the Hind Conference Simla brought this subject to the fore front of public attention and approached the highest authorities for its suppression.

Substantial work in this connection was done by the Himalaya Vidiya Prabandhani Sabha, which volunteered its services for the cause of the people of the hills. It convened small gatherings, started propaganda work, issued pamphlets and tried its best to root out this social evil. In a letter to E.G.F. Abraham, the Superintendent, Simla Hill States and the Deputy Commissioner, Simla District, the secretary Surat Singh, of the Sabha wrote in 1924 that "Some of the chiefs of the hill-states seemed to have prepared Reet to continue unchecked perhaps because of the handsome income they derive by way of the percentage they levied on the sale money of women. This percentage was intended to serve as a deterrent to the custom by imposing additional liability on the party concerned, but was now looked upon as no more than a tax, like others, leviable by, and due to the state".  

A Hindu conference was held at Simla on June 28-29, 1924 under the Presidentship of Rana Durga Chand, Chief of the Baghat State and about 500 delegates who had come from almost all the hill states attended the conference. The conference passed the following resolution about 'Reet'.

a) "That the custom of 'Reef' which prevails in the hills, being the root cause of the degraded condition of the people of the hills, of their poverty and misery, and of the depletion of the population and being contrary to shastras, the Rulers and Chiefs of Hill States and the Deputy Commissioner and the Agent to the governor-General, Punjab States, in whose jurisdiction the evil custom prevails, be requested to put it down by appropriate legislation. The Hindu community would feel grateful to them for this boon".4

b) "That the conference is of opinion that the decrees of the courts of ruling chiefs of Hill States in the matter of restitution of conjugal rights should be recognized and enforced by British Indian Courts, and that decrees of the British Indian Courts be recognized and enforced by the courts of the ruling chiefs of Hill States; that the non-recognition of such decrees is a source of great hardships and social mischief to the people".5

Surat Singh, enclosing a copy of the above resolution, appealed to the E.G.F. Abraham, Superintendent, Hill States, to prevail upon the hill chiefs to take up effective measures for wiping out by legislation the 'Reef' custom.6 The Sabha also convened meetings at several places to bring home to the people the vices of 'Reef' and passed such resolution, stating that no woman should remarry in her husband's life time. It appealed to the government to penalize the custom as the people were unable to put a stop to it themselves, as in the case of Sati and female infanticide. They had also been the pioneers in the eradication of slave trade from the face of the earth and the only explanation why they had so far been indifferent in the matter of
abolishing ‘Reet’ seemed to be that they had not yet been seized of the havoc this evil had done.\textsuperscript{7}

The Government of India, sent reminders to the Punjab Government in December 1926, and November 1927, enquiring about the latest position and progress made regarding the abolition of ‘Reet’. The later, supplied the information that by 1927, in Baghat, Jubbal and Bushahr, the custom of ‘Reet’ was prohibited, on paper at any rate. Other three states i.e. Kuthar, Mahlog and Nalagarh had agreed to adopt the rules\textsuperscript{8} framed by the sub-committee of the chiefs. Further, Bhajji and Baghal had also agreed to introduce the draft rules, but they were under the minority management. Therefore, the Governor in Council was averse to introducing the rules there. The question of introducing the rules in these states was to be postponed until their rulers attained majority and assumed full ruling powers. Even in the case of those states who agreed to introduce the draft regulations, the Local Government desired the Superintendent, Hill States, to advise the rulers to enforce rules with consideration, and not too harshly at once, because the people would take sometime to reconcile to these regulations.\textsuperscript{9}

The Punjab Government while supplying the information given above, remarked that with regard to the remaining hill states, it had directed C.V. Salusbury, the Superintendent, Hill States, to use his influence as opportunity offers, to persuade those states which have not yet accepted the rules to adopt them or similar rules.\textsuperscript{10} H.W. Emerson, Chief Secretary to Government of Punjab, in the end thus remarked on the 4\textsuperscript{th} January 1928, “I am to add that the Governor in Council does not consider that any further action is possible for the present and he does not propose to submit any further report.
to the Government of India unless the later particularly desire that further reports should be made".11

After 1928, the Government ceased to take interest in the matter. Moreover, the hill chiefs did not earnestly enforce the draft regulations. However, workers of the Himalaya Vidiya Prabandhani Sabha and Arya Samaj etc. continued to preach against the ‘Reet’ custom. Especially Surat Singh, General Secretary, Himalaya Vidiya Prabandhani Sabha continued his efforts for focusing the attention of the public, the hill chiefs and the British Government on the evil custom of ‘Reet’. Pandit Padam Dev, an active worker of Arya Samaj also toured many hill states and propagated among the people to do away with the baneful custom of ‘Reet’, child marriage, female infanticide and other social evils. However, despite all this, not much progress was made in eradicating the custom. As a result this pernicious custom of ‘Reet’ with its concomitant scourge of venereal diseases continued unabated. Thus, about fifty-five years after attaining independence, it is still prevalent among the poor people of the remote area of Shilai and Pachhad of district Sirmaur.

II. Barda Faroshi

In Simla Hill States as well as in Punjab Hill States, another an obnoxious social evil namely barda faroshi12 was prevalent since time immemorial. In the summer of 1924, the Punjab Government became seriously concerned with wiping out this social evil. It was the practice of dealing with the slaves, captives and servants, under which barda-froshes (slave dealers), carried a regular traffic in girls and boys in the Punjab, especially in its submontane parts and hill tracts of Kangra, Ambala and
Hoshiarpur districts. In the Simla Hill States, it existed even prior to the advent of the British. C.P. Kennedy, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Hill States, in July 1824 remarked that the “women of the hills until the British influence took place, were always in great request for the zananas or harems of the plains, and as slaves brought great price; the demand was probably greater than the country could supply”.

On 27th June, 1924, the Punjab Government wrote to the Registrar, High Court of Judicature, Lahore, enquiring as to what extent the practice of barda-faroshi existed in the province, and whether in the opinion of the Hon’ble Judges, special legislation was desirable in order to stamp out the evil. Moreover, copies of this letter were sent to all the Commissioners, the Deputy Commissioners, legal bodies and social organizations in the Punjab, for favour of an expression of their own opinion.

The Himalaya Vidiya Prabandhani Sabha submitted a proposal to insert a provision in the Indian Penal Code dealing with barda-faroshi and to amend section 361 of the code in order to raise the age of marriage in the case of boys from 14 to 16. It also addressed a letter to J.C. Coldstream, the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent Hill States, Simla on August 1, 1924 stating that the custom of Reet prevalent in the hill states was nothing short of barda-faroshi.

In the letter Thakur Surat Singh also suggested that in any proposed legislation on barda-faroshi, its definition should be wide enough so as to include father, brother and husband of a girl or whoever sells her not for bonafide purposes but for illicit intercourse and free latitude of marriage. Secondly provision should also be made for declaring liable to punishment
any person who procured a married or unmarried girl either for the sake of marrying her or for passing her on to another person for similar purposes. And thirdly, purchase of a girl for employment as household servant or for the purposes of giving her away in dowry as a khawas or maid servant with a bride should be prohibited. 17

At last, Surat Singh state that the railways and other transport facilities which had recently connected the hills with the plains were daily increasing the magnitude of the evil custom. The people from the plains freely visited these markets open for human transactions and the result was that hundreds of daughters and wives of simple and law-abiding hill men get enticed away from out of the hills every year. Such transactions in married and unmarried girls had no moral or legal support. 18

Thus, from the above particulars given by Thakur Surat Singh, it appears that he wanted to declare illegal barda-froshi as well as Reet. However, the British Government did not agree with him. Thakur Surat Singh did not feel discouraged and with the help of Himalaya Vidiya Prabandhani Sabha he continued his struggle for wiping out this social evil. But due to limited resources of the Sabha, he achieved only partial success.

On the another hand, in August 1924, the Deputy Commissioner, Kangra District reported that barda-froshi was prevalent mainly in the Sub-Division of Hamirpur, Dehra and in some area of Nurpur. Under this, kidnapping, buying and selling of girls for export was done by barda-froshes (slave-dealers) of the plains. Some girls were taken to quite distant places such as the United Province and the Canal Colonies now in the West Punjab (Pakistan). The girls purchased in the Mandi State, on their way to the plains,
often passed through the Kangra district. The Deputy Commissioner suggested that the social evil should be eradicated either by the penal legislation or by the amendment of the Indian Penal Code.¹⁹

III Begar System

The system of begar²⁰ had been prevalent in Himachal Pradesh since time immemorial. It is well known that in the hills wheeled conveyances did not exist. The imports and exports of the country, its social wants and other requirements of society were carried entirely on the backs of mules, bullocks and camels. There was also, a class of porters which earned its subsistence by this trade alone. For example, transport of traveller’s luggage, or for carrying unwieldy articles, such as timber for public purposes, human labour alone was available. By this necessity of the country, a custom had grown up, that possessed the sanction of ancient times. It is difficult to know and fix a definite date for the development of the begar system in the hills and the various phases through which it passed. The basic assumption of begar seems that all classes who cultivated the soil were bound to give, as a condition of tenure, a portion of their labour at the time of the need of state ruler or British government.²¹ Thus, the begar system often entailed the carrying of loads and other obligations of the state in addition to land revenue.

Furthermore, begar, the practice of rendering service gratis of various types also existed in the hill states. Describing begar or forced labour in the hills, Satyanand Stokes²² wrote, “Begar was the system by which the transportation of each state was carried on. It was not from stage to stage as at present, but from one village to the next. State materials and luggage
were carried from one village to another until they reached their destination. Though unpaid, this system entailed little hardship, not only because there was not much to carry by reason of the very simplicity of administration, but because only the begar of the state and its officials was carried.²³

The people by long imposition of begar gradually came to regard this obligation as one of the normal conditions of existence. So long as it was kept within legitimate bounds, they were content to render this duty with cheerfulness and promptitude. Certain classes, such as the privileged Brahmin and Rajput were exempted from these services and the burden fell mainly on the strictly agricultural classes. The meanest and the most burdensome forced labour was to carry heavy loads.²⁴

By the beginning of the 19th century, the practice of begar was universal in India with some exceptions where British Thanas of police had been established. The British Government gave official recognition to this arbitrary practice.²⁵ After the Gorkha war, the British Government availed the facilities of begar for their individual officials and troops while passing through the Hill States.

Under the British Government, the burden of the begar system increased in the Simla Hill States with the completion of Simla-Tibet road and the growth of Simla as a hill station. The officials and non-officials began to go for trips and sports in the interior of the hill states. They were permitted to make use of begar of hillmen on the condition of payment from the pargana situated in the vicinity because these hillmen were required to bring their own provisions and live at their own cost in the dak banglows. These men were provided by the mate (servants) kept in the dak banglows. The Englishmen
settled in the hills were also given the same privilege. The visiting official pays for everything else he receives at the *dak banglow* but the poor Hillman is not paid for his services.\textsuperscript{26} The *begar* system had also been prevalent in the state of Kangra, Chamba, Mandi and in the Uttranchal hills on the same basis as it was in the Simla Hill States.

**Kinds of Begar**

There were various kinds of *begar* which were prevalent in the hills such as (i) *Athwara Begar*, (ii) *Batrawal Begar*, (iii) *Jaddi-Baddi* or *Hala-Mala Begar* and *begar* towards various types of free services for the chiefs and political agents, state guests, construction and repair of roads, for high official beating a jungle for *Shikar* (hunt) and religious *begar*.

1. **Athwara Begar**

It was a personal *begar* to the ruler under which compulsory unpaid labour could be taken from any person for any purpose, and it was demanded by the state and given without question by the people. It included service given at the *darbar* of the chief by men of various *parganas* of the state in rotation. Usually it was used for supplying firewood to the *darbar*, for the ruler and his family and grass for their cattle and horses. It was also used for the cultivation of the ruler's *Basa* (crown estates or khudkast) lands. It was also used by the state officials and *Ahilkars* (Revenue assessment officers) in whose favour the use of a certain number of *Athwara Begar* had been sanctioned for private supply of grass and firewood.\textsuperscript{27} This compulsory unpaid labour was taken from each house or holding for certain number of days in the year. The period of *begar* differed from state to state.
The *Athwara Begar* was the most irksome and pernicious kind of *begar* and tended itself to obvious abuses and was undoubtedly a great burden on the people. It interfered seriously with a man working in his fields who had to go for *Athwara Begar* leaving all his own work unattended. This kind of compulsory unpaid labour was known as coolie *utar* in U.P. hills now Uttranchal and *Pund begar* in Kangra and Chamba states.

2. *Batrawal Begar* or *Hallah Ka Begar*

It was taken for public works and for the carriage of stones and wood for all construction or repairs in the state building and bridges etc. It was taken at the rate of one *begari* from each house.

*Zamindars* and *jagirdars* were not allowed to take this kind of *begar* because they had earlier misused the privilege given to them by the state. Instead of taking one *begari* from each household they had exploited the cultivators by taking two or sometime even three *begar* from a single household.

The period of *Batrawal* differed from state to state. The exemption from *Batrawal* were numerous but not so general. This type of *begar* was practiced in Bushahr, Balson and Rawingarh states up to the beginning of the twentieth century and rest of the states had commuted it into cash cess. After this such works were put under the head of the Public Works Department budget.

3. *Jaddi-Baddi* or *Hela-Mela*

It was an occasional *begar* and was exacted for special reasons. It was a custom for all to be present in the *darbar* for bringing grass, fuel and doing other labour on the occasions of marriages or deaths in the ruling
family and installation of the new ruler. When at attendance, they were given ration. It was equitable and Brahmans were treated likewise. It was given in lieu of revenue as it had been taken into account when revenue was assessed.31

Thus, it was in the form of a personal tribute to the ruler and so long as personal rule continued, it reflected a personal respect of the state subject to their chief. Occasions of its levy were comparatively rare as to other type of begar and the people did not object to rendering such type of service. That was why, this was obligatory as far as lambardars, zamindars and other officials were concerned.

**Touring Begar**

In this system begar were employed for carrying loads and camp arrangements of the chief and his family when touring in the state. It became quite difficult and burdensome when the ruler or any member of his family were taken in palanquin.32 But this kind of begar did not fall heavily because the tours of the chief and his family were not frequent. It was also equitable on all subjects. In the certain states namely Baghal, Baghat, Bija, Jubbal, Koti, Kuthar, Mahlog and Tharoch, it was started to be paid for by the beginning of twentieth century.33

**5. Begar for State Guest, Political Officers and High Officials**

It consisted the supply of begar for camp arrangements and carrying the luggage of the state guest, officers and high official when on tour. It was the same as that which was given to the chief while travelling within the state territory. In many states, villages had to supply milk free of charge for use in camp. It could, however, be at times a great burden if this kind of labour was
asked for at a time when agricultural operations required the cultivators to work on their own fields.

6. Gaonsar Begar

Under it begar were used for carrying the baggage etc. of tehsil, police and village officials from village to village on their tours. It had the sanction of immemorial custom and in a community where money was scarce and time of little moment was probably preferable to any additional money payment. This begar was taken everywhere in India.  

This kind of begar was of three types. Firstly, the residents of the village had to arrange for the carriage of the state and government dak to the next village. Secondly, they had to repair village roads when called upon to do so. Thirdly, they had to supply unpaid coolies for the purposes of transport of certain state officials. The first two of three burden were not heavy, although the requirement of dak tended to increase, the labour on village roads, decreased steadily as the state and forest departments extended the obligation under their control maintenance. But in Bushahr State, patwans and chaprasis were entitled for this begar and other officials were given travelling allowance.

7. The Road Begar

It was a form of gaonsar begar and consisted in repair of roads and bridle-tracks done by begaris in their respective states. It was also equitable on all the people. It was not used for the construction of new roads. In Bushahr there came complaints about road begar because some villages had large thorough roads to maintain. In Nalagarh the burden of road begar was recognized and commuted and totally abolished in Baghat, Kuthar and
Jubbal.\textsuperscript{36} But later on the state maintained the main roads, state paths etc. and village footpaths were left to the discretion of villagers.

8. Shikar Begar

This was performed during visits of high officials or friends of the ruler at beating jungles for game. But this kind of \textit{begar} was disapproved by settlement officer. It was made compulsory that if the ruler engaged beater for his friends, he had to pay for them. On occasion when the Viceroy went out for \textit{Shikar} (shooting), he distributed \textit{bakshish} to the beaters which was equivalent to then daily wage.\textsuperscript{37}

9. Mule Begar

In many hill states some shopkeepers and \textit{zamindars} kept mules for trade purposes. They supplied the mules to the state according to the requirements. A commutation fee was fixed for mule \textit{begar} at rupees five per mule annually from shopkeepers and rupees two and eight \textit{annas} from the \textit{zamindars}.\textsuperscript{38}

10. Religious Begar

This kind of \textit{begar} has not been mentioned anywhere in the sources regarding \textit{begar} except at one place, when in 1940, W.F. Webb, the political agent, Punjab Hill States, Simla, mentioned five kinds of \textit{begar} in his note to Secretary to the Resident of the Punjab States, of which religious \textit{begar} was one.\textsuperscript{39}

The religious \textit{begar} consisted in labour in connection with the ceremonies and celebrations of festivals of the local deities. Such ceremonies were part of religion of the people and therefore, the people had to contribute on such occasion. There is an instance of such an occasion in
Bushahr State when the dyapon ceremony or jag was celebrated on a very large scale at the temple of Bhima Kali at Sarahan in 1904. The funds for the celebration were collected from the state subjects in kind and cash. Though people were financially weak yet they had to pay rupees four per holding under the fear from the ruler. Moreover, it was the custom for all to be present at the darbar and present tribute, according to their means, to the Raja and sometimes to other members of his family.

Thus, presentation on such religious occasion was obligatory to the state subjects and it seems to be a kind of begar. People had the compulsion from the ruler on one hand and fear of the deity on the other. This kind of service still exists in the villages of present Himachal Pradesh in one form or the other where people of lower caste have to carry the drums of the local deities and upper caste people also accompany without any remuneration when the deities are on tour in the villages. These people had no choice because of the compulsion from the society.

The period of above mentioned kinds of begar differed from state to state due to their customs and conditions.

There is also an instance of begar being imposed in terms of land revenue, that is to say, a man who paid more land revenue than his neighbours had to furnish begar for longer period.

In Koti and Sangri states begaris also served as policemen. They lived in their own homes, not in the thanas, but were supposed to be ready when they were required. In Bushahr the amount of begar which jagirdars are to be allowed had been fixed. They would be allowed begar for cooking and drawing water and this begar service would be counted as Chakri begar.
rendered to the State. The limit was service of one month from a household. Those who gave *begar* to the *jagirdars* had not to work for the state and vice-versa.⁴³

**Different Gradations of Begar in Kangra**

Among the agricultural classes of Kangra, there were gradations of *begar* well recognized. The meanest and most onerous kind of forced labour was to carry loads known as *Pund-begar*. Those agricultural classes that did not wear the *juneo* (thread of caste), were all liable to this obligation. A lighter description of *begar* was termed *Satbahuk*, and consisted in carrying messages, letters and any parcel which could be conveyed by the hand. The fulfillment of this duty implied no degradation, and involved no great sacrifice of personal comfort. It was therefore, reserved as the special province of those classes, who although occupied in agriculture, were privileged to wear the *juneo*. A third kind of *begar* was to provide wood and grass for camps, and under native rulers this labour devolved upon *Chumars* and other out-cast people, whose supposed impurity alone saved them from carrying loads.⁴⁴

The people were very tenacious of these distinctions. The British rule and their natural ignorance of these gradations, deprived them, at first, of the opportunity of remonstrance whenever these limits were transgressed. But it was a common complaint that the petitioner was a *Sutbahuk*, and not obnoxious to the *Pund begar*. The difficulty of dealing with these complaints, and the facilities afforded by the settlement for compiling an accurate register, Induced G.C. Barnes, Settlement Officer, Kangra, to draw up a nominal list of all the residents in the village, shewing those who enjoyed absolute immunity,
and those who were subject, either wholly or partially, to the condition of begar.\textsuperscript{45}

Hence forward in case of dispute, a reference to this Register, which had been prepared in the village, with the cognizance and approval of the people themselves, would decide whether the claimant was entitled to the partial exemption of a Sutbahuk begar or bound to the full obligation of the Pund begar.

In this way the system of begar was almost universal in native states of Himachal. Each kind of begar played a separate part in the state economy. But as soon as the cash economy (Apple and Potato) of hill people began to develop, they found this unpaid labour oppressive and all kind of begar began to be commuted into cash.

**Beth System**

*Beth* was an obligation to render personal service in return for certain cultivating rights. Those, who rendered this service for rulers and zamindars were known as *bethu* (service tenant). The *bethu* occupied and tilled land which in fact belonged to the Raja or Zamindars. He cultivated a portion for his subsistence and the remaining portion he cultivated on behalf of the Raja or zamindars who received the profits. In addition he had some responsibilities for carrying loads.\textsuperscript{46} The ruler naturally did not receive land revenue from the land cultivated by the *bethus*.

The *bethus* received from the state or his master, food two or three times a day, a suit of clothes, once in a year, a house to live in and a few bighas of land to cultivate for his own profits. The lower classes such as Kolis, Rehrs etc., who stood low in the social ladder and did this kind of *beth*
service. Thus, *bethus* rendered services as a part of their being given right to cultivate the land of their masters and it may be regarded as one of the worst forms of *begar*.

The *bethus* consisted of different classes such as:

a) **Class I Bethus (employed by the State and Jagirdars)**

Those who were directly under the state and worked in the *Basa* (crown estates or *khudkasht*) land and produce of which was given to the ruler or state. The *bethus* employed by the *jagirdars* also fall under Class I category.

b) **Class II Bethus (employed by the *zamindars*)**

Those who worked in the fields of *zamindars*. These *bethus* were in better place than those employed by the state, because the *bethus* under the *zamindars* were in closer daily contact with their masters whereas the *bethus* under state had indirect contact with their master, through the servants of the state.

c) **Class III Bethus (Indebted Bethus)**

Indebted *bethus* who had taken loans from their masters and in return they agreed to work and supply goods in lieu of interest and the principal amount in their case was not liquidated. Indebt *bethus*, in some cases, worked for generations and even then they remained under debt. Thus, it was a kind of agricultural serfdom under which the individual and his children after him often remained in permanent slavery.

The *bethus* descended from father to son by a right of inheritance as long as they cultivated well and rendered services to their masters. The
bethus of all kinds were worst sufferers and were treated like beasts by their masters of various categories such as ruler, jagirdar and zamindar.

Brahmins, influential Rajputs, state and village officials and respectable men of lower grade were exempted from begar. The rich Bania families secured commutation of begar into cash. The burden fell mainly on the people of the lower classes such as Bahri, Chamar, Lohar, Koli, Rehr etc. Soldiers of Indian army who were subjects of their states were exempted from begar in 1840. But those who were exempted had to render some petty and occasional kinds of begar.\(^{50}\)

There seems no such provision in the Simla Hill States as that prevailed in the Mandi State that those classes who were exempted from begar, particularly that of fixed days in the year, had to perform other services instead, such as, the Rajputs were expected to give military service, Brahmins were expected to assist the state festivals, to work in the ruler’s kitchen on special occasions and always pray for the long life and prosperity of their chief, and traders had to help with the distribution of supplies and preparation of accounts on occasion of state entertainment.\(^{51}\)

**Review of Begar System**

Socially, both begar and beth systems were oppressive and obviously both the systems effected the hill people very badly. The beth system, as compared to begar, was more oppressive as the bethu was confined to serve only his master and to work at a particular place of the choice of his master who normally forced him to construct a thatched hut in the fields. Such bethus were virtually cut off from the rest of the world for all practical purposes. The burden of begar too was heavily imposed by the state which
consequently encouraged the continuation of large joint families. The states had always discouraged the partition of families in its own interest. This ensured that a man could be easily available for begar, when it was his turn to render service.\(^5^2\)

Brothers were compelled to live together and the independent character of hill woman constrained them to have a wife in common, for the sake of their domestic peace, since the hill woman was not ready to tolerate a rival in her house.\(^5^3\) Thus, another result of begar system was that it became the one of the causes for the rise of polyandry.\(^5^4\) It enabled a family of brothers to get the full benefits of several sources of livelihood and protect the wife in the dangerous country when the husband was away. Polyandry was directly encouraged by the state through penalties exacted on partitions. When a set of brothers divided moveable property, one-half of share of the whole was appropriated by the state, and divisions of immovable property were refused official recognition.\(^5^5\)

The begar system was also a source of corruption such as bribe in the society. The families having only one male adult, would often bribe the patwari or lambardar to get exemption from rendering begar.\(^5^6\) Another implication of the begar system was that it fostered the habits of idleness. The object of the begari was to do as little as possible because he had to receive nothing for the work and one could not blame him for his work. Thus, the state got nothing and apart from the economic wastage, the effects were demoralizing for all concerned.

Since the establishment of British supremacy over the hill states in 1815 upto the close of 19\(^{th}\) century there seems to have occurred no popular
agitation against the begar system prevalent in the Himachal hill states. However, with the improvement of the financial positions, the begaris became conscious of their oppression and started making complaints against this evil practice to their respective settlement officers and requested that cash be levied in place of personal begar. As a result of continued oppression of Athwara-Begar on the part of the rulers and other officials, led to rebellions in many hill states such as in Kuthar in 1895, Keonthal in 1901, Theog in 1910-28, Khaneti in 1906, Kumarsain in 1920 and Dhami in 1937.

In Keonthal state people of four northern parganas, namely Matiana, Shilli, Rajona and Chandra revolted in 1893, against the oppressive system of athwara and stopped providing begar. But it was settled according to the demands of the people as in other states such as Kuthar, Theog and Khaneti. In 1910, the Kanets and Kolis of the state presented a petition to the settlement officer at Junga against athwara begar, requesting the abolition of athwara at Junga and the fixation of cash in lieu thereof.

Although all hill men felt that something must be done against the begar at once, but no community was in a position to move except that at Kotgarh because its people were more educated and also because it was a bit of British territory wedged in among the states. Kotgarh, therefore, had lesser complications than the other states where a double authority made the situation more complex. The issue was taken up by S.E. Stokes, who was a missionary and settled in Kotgarh, formed a sort of vigilance committee and made a representation to Col. Elliot, at the time Superintendent of Hill States in Simla district, for the redressal of the grievances of the begaris and achieved some success.
Meanwhile, despite meetings with the Viceroy and the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, stokes had been unsuccessful in persuading the government to curtail the issue of permits which forced people to work as coolies. He then decided to use the weapon of passive resistance and organized the people of Kotgarh and surrounding areas against the evil of begar. In November 1920, one of Stokes friend, C.F. Andrews, wrote in 'The Tribune' after visiting Kotgarh that "The bitterest discontent ran throughout the whole district and the people were on the edge of revolt". In June 1921, when the Superintendent of Hill States visited Kotgarh, the villagers refused to render the begar, so that his accompanying staff found themselves reduced to gathering their own wood and bringing their own water. Finally, this officer had to move up to the D.F.O's bungalow where he could have the services of the forest staff. Fifteen agitators were arrested.

The agitation, however, culminated at Edward Gunj in Simla. During June and July 1921, the question was given wide publicity at public meetings and a resolution presented by Stokes was passed at the Gunj. He hoped that the "Simla public would take the matter in hand and would see that justice was wrenched out of the unwilling". At a succession of meetings convened at Gunj to spread the nationalist goal of Swaraj, Stokes seized the opportunity to detail, in chaste Hindi, the iniquities of begar.

Once the anti-begar agitation had shifted to Simla, a series of meetings between the Government, represented by the Deputy Commissioner, and Stokes was held. In September 1921, the British Government gave in and begar was abolished in Simla district. Buck recounts, "The begar custom, or forced labour system has been abolished,
and the traveller, unless he be a Government official travelling on duty, has to make his own terms with both men and mules for baggage purposes. This has added considerably to the cost of travelling in the hills.\textsuperscript{64}

The begar system was one of the potent causes for the organization of Praja Mandals\textsuperscript{65} in the Himachal hill states. The Praja Mandals were organized for the attainment of democratic rights for the people in most of the hill states, in some places openly and in some secretly. The British Indian Government began to receive complaints of people against begar through Praja Mandals after their organization.\textsuperscript{66} To rouse people it undertook to organize public meetings at different places in various Simla Hill States, collect data about injustices and cruelties perpetrated on hill people, represent their case before the political agent and the ruler through deputations and memoranda and encourage people to refuse to pay unjust taxes and perform begar.

As a result of the growth of political consciousness and agitations against the social evils, the British Government evolved a model policy\textsuperscript{67} on begar and beth by introducing reforms in this system in October 1944 through which unpaid forced labour was finally prohibited in the Simla Hill States. If the people found any injustice against them by the ruler, they presented petitions to British authority against it. The bethus of Theog, Shillag pargana of Chebisi of Kumarsain and Madhan states presented petitions to the political agent of the Simla Hill States, against their respective rulers who were refusing to grant certain rights to them as sanctioned in the model policy.\textsuperscript{68}
The progress report received by the British Government up to August 1946 was that except the state of Mangal, *begar* policy was applied by all the Simla Hill States and paid forced labour was taken only on the occasion such as tours of high officials, *Dak, Hela* and *Shikar*. In Mangal there had been no settlement and land revenue was paid in kind and by service.69

Thus, with the adoption of the model *begar* policy by the Simla Hill States unpaid forced labour came to an end. The *begar* system had been already abolished in Chamba, Mandi and Kangra in 1884.70 Finally, *begar* paid or unpaid was prohibited within the territory of Himachal Pradesh in May 1948.71

The popular estimate of the system has been summed up in the following two proverbs:

"The sky loses its brightness when overcast with clouds, water its purity when covered with slime, a pretty wife her charm at her parent's home and a man his manliness in the Raja's *begar* service"; and "Chamar even at point of death dreams of *begar*."72

*Begar* or the compulsory unpaid labour played an important role in the day-to-day conduct of the business of the state. Initially the system may have suited well to the conditions of the hill states when the requirements of the ruler were moderate, the circulation of currency was limited and the resources of the people were very meagre. All persons who were settled on the land were employed by the Raja in different forms of state service. The *begar* system was prevalent throughout the hill areas between the rivers Yamuna and Ravi. Several factors such as land and its ownership, local conditions, topography and needs of the people were responsible for the
evolution of the *begar* system in the hills of Himachal. With the passage of time, this forced labour became a permanent feature and thus free service to the ruler or *zamindar* in lieu of land cultivation came to be known as *beth-begar*.

With the passage of time the *begar* system became more oppressive. At the same time the people too became conscious of this evil practice. In the second quarter of twentieth century, social, political and regional organizations as mentioned earlier were organized in the hill states to gain their political goals. These organizations also made the complete abolition of *begar* and *beth* as one of their goals. In this way these organizations raised political consciousness among the people of the hill states and made representations to British Government against this evil custom. As a result the British had to prepare a model policy on *begar* and *beth* in consultation with the rulers on the basis of enquiries in the Simla Hill States in October 1944. This model policy was adopted by all the rulers and henceforth *begar* and *beth* came to an end. Paid forced labour was allowed by the British Government only when the labourers were not available.

With the independence of India the democratic process came into force in the administration all over the country. The rulers and their subjects became equal before law. Thus, the *begar* and *beth* system which had suppressed the people for centuries and made them live in miserable conditions was completely eradicated in Himachal Pradesh.
Notes and References


2. The 'Reet' is a term applied to the value of clothes and ornaments given to the bride by her husband at the time of marriage. It also includes the other expenses incurred by him on the marriage. When the relations between a wife and her husband become strained the married girl returns to her parental home and refuses to go back to her husband. Then no formal divorce is affected but this constitutes a separation freeing her to marry another man if her father is prepared to reimburse to the first husband the amount of 'Reet' and a rupee which is called 'Chhed Karai'. see *Abolition of Custom Rit in Simla Hills, 1910*, Punjab Hill States Agency, Bundle No. 11, File No. 344, (State Archive, Shimla).


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid.

8. These rules dealt with the period for which a married girl could stay with her parents after marriage; the conditions under which husband or wife could apply to Courts of Law for divorce; no forcible driving of wife by husband from his house; the age difference between wife and husband and their ages at the time of marriage and the punishments to be given in case of infringement of the rules etc. for details see C.L. Datta, *op.cit.*, pp. 351-52.

9. Ibid., p. 145.


11. Ibid.
12. 'Barda' means a captive servant, a slave; 'farosh' means dealer. 'Barda-faroshi' meaning a slave-dealer or the practice of selling the slave or captives. See F. Steingass, A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, (New Delhi, 1977), p. 173.


15. Thakur Surat Singh to Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent Hill States, Simla, 1 August 1924, Bundle No. 11, File No. 344, State Archive, Shimla.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


25. Mian Bashir Ahmed Farooqi, British Relations with the Cis-Sutlej States, 1809-1823, (Lahore, 1941), p. 50.


28. The system was so hard that the *zamindars* of the *parganas* of Rawin and Punder of Keonthal State being at distance of 57 to 42 miles respectively, from Junga, the capital of the state, supplied the *darbar* firewood, which was used daily by the raja and his household. See *Keonthal State Settlement Report, 1914*, Punjab Hill States Agency, 1934, Bundle No. 1, File No. 15 (State Archive, Shimla), p. 45.


32. According to local tradition Jahanara Begum is believed to have come to Kumarsain State for musk hunting in the Hatu peak. The Rana of Kumarsain is said to have provided *begaris* for carrying the palanquin and baggage of the princess. See Bhagwat Rai, *Baharee Kumarsain*, (Delhi, 1930), p. 56.

33. *Begar in Simla Hill States*, *op.cit.*, p. 64.


45. Ibid., p. 230.


50. Ibid., p. 112.


53. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

54. For details of the rise of polyandry see, Y.S. Parmar, op.cit.

55. *Gazetteer of the Simla Hill States, 1910, Bushahr State*, op.cit., p. 16.

56. See Emerson’s Note on Reduction of Atharu Labour in H.W. Emerson, op.cit., para-1.


60. *The Tribune*, 8 February 1921.


63. Ibid., see also 16 June 1921.


65. For more details on Praja Mandal see Chapter 5, Part-II.

67. For details see Begar in Simla Hill States, op.cit., pp. 153-54.


Chapter-V (Part-II)

Struggle Against the Mis-Rule of Princely States (1920-48)
Mahatma Gandhi in Simla.
Chapter 5

Struggle Against the Mis-Rule of Princely States
(1920-48)

Part-II

Shimla and the National Movement

The Summer Capital, up till the 1920, had been politically quiescent and public life was a 'sluggish stream... moving slowly, stagnating between high official banks'\(^1\). This tranquility was the outcome of the design of preserving Simla as a uniquely English enclave by placing restrictions on expansion of the town and increase in its Indian population. Nevertheless, the Indian population had doubled between 1898 and 1921. Many British-owned houses and estates were gradually purchased and occupied by Indians. With these changes in the pattern of property ownership, and with population increase, resentment developed against features which established British racial superiority in Simla.

At the national level Mahatma Gandhi's\(^2\) attempt to transform the Indian National Congress into a mass movement for the liberation of the country had also a great deal to do with the awakening of state subjects. When Gandhi alighted at the Summer Hill Railway Station near Simla on 11 May 1921, there was an immense crowd of hill people to receive him.\(^3\) Preparations had been afoot since the early hours, and by the time of his arrival the town was 'garlanded and enfete, - albeit good-humouredly so – to the last degree'.\(^4\)

Scores of school boys had missed school and flocked to Summer Hill for a glimpse of Gandhi and to join in the festivity of the occasion.\(^5\) During his
Gandhi in Simla
four day's visit, crowds trailed after him whenever he set out from 'Shanti Kuteer' on Summer Hill. On 13 May, when he met Lord Reading, they followed him to the gates of Viceregal Lodge with the cry *Betaj Badshah Ki Jai* (victory to the uncrowned King).°

On 14 May 1921, he created a sensation when he addressed the women of Simla at the Arya Samaj Hall in Lower Bazar; thereafter he was taken out in procession through the gaily decorated bazar to the house of Lala Mohan Lal (a member of the Municipal Committee). The climax of this visit came on 15 May, a Sunday morning. Mahatma Gandhi addressed a meeting attended by 15,000 people at the Idgah.® Since it was Sunday, the large crowd also included innumerable government employees. A novel feature was the presence of a multitude of hill folk who had thronged to Simla from the surrounding hill states for a *darshan* (glimpse) of Mahatma Gandhi. Contemporary accounts state that Gandhi's visit had aroused unprecedented enthusiasm in Simla's population. In Durga Das's words, Simla experienced its 'first major stir'.®

Gandhi had been invited to meet Reading, the Viceroy, in order to create a favourable climate for the visit of the Prince of Wales in December 1921. The all-India response organized by Gandhi to the repressive Rowlatt Act of 1919, had been overwhelming, and apprehending another spell of protest, the Viceroy had invited Gandhi for talks.®

Gandhi was accompanied by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Lala Lajpat Rai, who utilized the visit to collect funds for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, and to spread the message of Swaraj in Simla. At every meeting, Gandhi spoke on non-violence, sacrifice, Hindu-Muslim unity and the use of the
Charkha as the road to freedom. Lala Lajpat Rai made impassioned addresses, stressing the need for removal of the slave mentality and making a fearless stand for the principles for which the Congress was fighting. It was the first occasion that the residents of Simla had been directly exposed to the nationalist leaders and their point-of-view. Hitherto, the only public functions in Simla had been annual celebrations for the king Emperor's birthday-devices calculated to promote belief in the strength and continuity of the Empire. Gandhi's visit provided an alternative, and contrasting focus of attention. Public opinion in Simla now began to crystallize around the goals and ideals of Swaraj as spelt out by nationalist leaders.

Several other factors accelerated the pace of people's resentment and also linked it with the nationalist movement. The bicameral legislature, set up under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919, brought politicians of an all-India reputation to Simla during the summer months. Slogans and ideologies that formed a part of nationalist politics were thus introduced into Simla. Simultaneously the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, was transformed from a party of upper-class professional and intellectuals into a mass movement with attainment of Swaraj as its goal. The whole style of politics underwent a change and such mass involvement ushered in a new era for Simla as well. Edwards Gunj (popularly Gunj bazar now), the only unbuilt area in the crowded confines of Lower Bazar, became the venue for spontaneous political meetings, and the response of hill people in Simla to the nationalist movement changed from one of languid awareness to sporadic involvement.
Impact of Gandhi’s Visit on Local Leaders and Hillmen

Mahatma Gandhi’s visit affected Simla in two ways. Firstly, it activated local leaders into making elaborate arrangements for his welcome. News of his visit was widely circulated so that those living in Simla and its surrounding hill states could gather to hear him. Secondly, local problems and other issues viz. Begar, Reet and despotic rule of the hill rulers had been the subject of petitions and memorials for several years, were now presented at public meetings before large audiences at the Gunj Maidan. Whereas leaders of an all-India stature sought to inform the hill people about nationalist goals, local leaders cashed in on the mood to present the issues of hill people. Three personalities dominated the local political scene namely Dr. Kedar Nath (General Secretary of district Congress) and Lala Harish Chandra (President of the city Congress), who were active in municipal politics, and an American missionary from Kotgarh, Samuel Evans Stokes, who aroused public opinion on the question of Begar and encouraged the villagers of the Simla Hill States to converge on Simla to present their grievances.

Prior to the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Simla, the hill people protest was, however, also linked to the march of national events. The passing of the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy activated the Simla Congress; in April 1919, Kedar Nath and Harish Chandra succeeded in persuading Simla shopkeepers and traders to close their shops and attend a public meeting in the Gunj. Simla, unlike Delhi, Bombay and Lahore remained calm, and no violent incident occurred. But for the first time in its history, volunteers of the Simla Rifle Corps opened up the armoury in anticipation of violence. The Simla Times reported:
“The strike of shopkeepers passed off quietly... The vast majority of Hindus, Mohammedans and Sikhs who closed their shops or otherwise participated in the agitation had no evil intention.”

Even if the shopkeepers 'appeared 'puzzled' they had nevertheless been introduced to the new weapons of the hartal and the public meeting. Thus, this was a successful protest organized by Congress workers in 1919.

The imperial summer capital was gradually undergoing a sea change. The Simla public began increasingly to witness the airing of local problems and see the rise of local leadership. One of the issues raised frequently at political meetings in the Gunj in the summer of 1921, and one that concerned the British and the native rulers directly, was that of Begar, which required people to serve as coolies to carry luggage etc. virtually free. This burden fell heavily on villagers living along the more frequented routes, and provided the basis for the inexpensive hunting and sightseeing trips made by the British to the Simla hill states. Such trips, especially along the Hindustan-Tibet road, were part of the attraction of Simla's summer season. It was thus, misuse of forced labour which was taken up by S.E. Stokes.

In 1921, political activity in Simla was quite uncharacteristically, “no less marked than in any other busy city”. Of the two recurring local questions, the plea for an elected municipality concerned Simla's literate and propertied population directly. The year 1921 marked the end of an era when Indian members were nominated as rubber stamps for decisions made by successive Deputy Commissioners. Indian commercial and business interests had become assertive and wanted municipal representation, as their European counterparts did. The question of begar, on the other hand, arose
in Simla Hill States and was effectively brought to the town. The authorities had been compelled to compromise on both issues.

Civil Disobedience on the Mall

On 16 July 1930, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly Gaya Prashad\(^1\) said, "The right of the meanest citizen to walk on a public road is a matter of public importance".\(^2\) The 'public road' he referred to was the Mall road of Simla and the occasion was the arrest of Congress volunteers; the legislator was voicing the general indignation about the restriction of movement on the Mall.

For middle-class Indians living in Simla, the Mall was more than a mere road running the length of the town. It was a symbol of humiliating subservience and of racial discrimination; a special European preserve where the Indian could not saunter along as did the European. A Simla municipal traffic rules and regulations\(^3\) proclaimed:

"From the 15\(^{th}\) of March till the 15\(^{th}\) of October, both days inclusive, and between the hours of 3 P.M. and 8 P.M. no job porter or coolie shall solicit employment, loiter, or carry any load in any street".

It was, however, along the Mall that the clause was insultingly enforced. The municipal rule specified coolies and job porters, but this ruling was also extended to 'ill-dressed Indians' and in 1930, to khadi-clad Congressmen as well.

Revival of Simla Congress

The Simla Congress was revived in 1929, with a membership of sixty-seven. The resignation of Vithalbhai Patel as President of the Legislative Assembly on 26 April 1930 signaled the spread of civil disobedience to Simla.
Vithalbhai, elder brother of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, and the first Indian President of the Legislative Assembly, was a familiar figure in Simla. Vithalbhai had repeatedly asserted his prerogative as President in defiance of viceregal directives. He was reputed to have mastered the smallest detail of British Parliamentary practices. His rulings were never challenged as partisan, although his sympathies lay with the nationalist opposition. His resignation from his position as a result of ‘harassment, persecution, and boycott’, set the Indians of Lower Bazar seething with resentment.¹⁰

Vithalbhai was approached by local Congressmen to address a public meeting, which he suggested be followed by a procession through the Lower Bazar and across the Mall to the railway station, from where he was to leave by train.

On 27 April 1930, a Sunday afternoon, a garlanded Vithalbhai was taken in procession, and for the first time in Simla’s history, the imperial and imperious tranquility of the Mall was shattered by a slogan-shouting anti-Government crowd of Indians. After, he had addressed a large gathering at ‘Edward Gunj’, the crowd assembled at the Telegraph Office, and then wended its way along Lower Bazar, reaching the Mall near the shop of Cotton and Morris (now Sher-i-Punjab); and then pressed across the Mall to the railway station. Vithalbhai’s flower-decorated rickshaw was pulled by Congress volunteers, and piloted by four traders on horseback – two Simla Ahritis, Nand Lal and Gokal, Rana Hoshiar Singh, proprietor of the Simla Dairy, and Rup Lal of Bharari – and twenty school boys. It was followed by ranks of school girls of the Arya Girls School, led by their headmistress, Indra Devi.²⁰ It was by all counts a large procession; newspapers put the number
at five thousand, the Simla police report at eight to ten thousand, and the official communiqué to the Home Member at two thousand. _The Tribune_ reported the event with obvious delight:

“Practically the whole town was out. The procession passed both the Lower Bazar and the Mall without a hitch... Throughout the route typical Congress posters were hung. The volunteers constantly cried, *Inqilab Zindabad*, ‘Up, up with the National Flag’, ‘Down, down with Union Jack’. ‘Up, up with Gandhi cap’, ‘Down, down with English hat’. One party asked in a chorus what would now happen to the assembly, another party replied in a chorus that owls would cry there now”.

**Civil Disobedience Gains Momentum**

The organization of Vithalbhai Patel’s farewell procession and the agitation thereafter was a continuation of Congress stand against racial discrimination in Simla. The Vithalbhai’s procession triggered off a summer season of frenetic political activity, and civil disobedience acquired a hue that was germane to Simla. From April to September 1930, there were Congress processions, picketing of wine shops, weekly public meetings, and constant propaganda. Fifteen processions were taken out by the Congress, and fifty-three public meetings held in the Gunj under its auspices.

A symbolic salt-making ceremony by three Congress volunteers from amongst local leaders was performed and the manufactured salt auctioned for the sum of eighty rupees. In response to Gandhi’s anti-liquor programme, Congress volunteers picketed three liquor shops on the Mall.
Role of Women

Women played a prominent part in Congress activities in 1930. In July 1930, when the Congress office-bearers were convicted, the women continued the picketing. The wife of Gainda Mal and N.L. Varma, Lakshmi Devi and Lajja Varma respectively, were joined by 35 women volunteers from Lahore, and Kamala Devi, daughter of Duni Chand, an Ambala pleader. Satyavati from Amritsar, an eloquent speaker and poetess, was mainly responsible for organizing the women volunteers of Simla. A police report observed: "She is a dangerous agitator who does more harm than political leaders... She sings her own poems and songs in the meetings." The women were to be seen shouting slogans below the Legislative Assembly, on the Mall and in Lower Bazar, urging legislators, including Jinnah, to resign their seats.

Dina Nath Andhi, the son of Bhag Mal Sood, a cloth merchant from Pragpur (Kangra), was one of the Congress volunteers who, time and again in 1930, defied the Police Act on the Mall. He earned the nickname Andhi (storm) because of the frequency with which he was produced for such offences before the magistrate. On 4 May 1930, while announcing Gandhi's arrest, he was arrested along with twelve others and released after a warning. In August 1930, he led Congress volunteers picketing the liquor shops on the Mall. When arrested, he gave his name as Andhi, son of Gandhi.

Congress volunteers' activities were largely confined to violation of the Police Act on the Mall. The Pioneer of 8 May 1930 reported: "Last evening, the local Congress Secretary sent out some boys to announce Mr. Gandhi's
arrest. They paraded the streets shouting revolutionary cries. A small crowd collected and joined them. After they had passed the Mall twelve of them were arrested for obstructing traffic. On the evening of 13 May 1930, N.L. Varma and a few volunteers stood on the Mall for two hours, where a crowd gathered. Finally, the Simla Deputy Commissioner ordered the fire brigade water-hose to be turned on them, and sent them hurtling down to the Middle Bazar. Varma was injured.

In July 1930, when the Legislative Assembly was in session, a special correspondent of The Tribune wrote: "I should record that every afternoon, when the Assembly is in session, a batch of about a dozen volunteers... pass beneath the Chamber shouting, "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" and "Inquilab Zindabad"... These volunteers have also scored another triumph. Their very Gandhi cap is their offence and once they come up the Mall they are arrested on the spot". Volunteers were usually arrested for obstructing traffic, and released in the evening. The frequent incursions on the Mall by Congress workers remained a constant threat to the Simla authorities.

**Gandhi-Irwin Pact and Simla**

The first Round Table Conference at London was held while thousands of Indians were going to jail, or facing lathis, bullets and suffering damage to their property. Attempts to hammer out a constitutional compromise by a handful of largely un-representative delegates – Muslim League politicians, Hindu Mahasabha leaders, Liberals, and a big princely contingent had failed. The Congress had to be involved. Talks were held in Delhi between Gandhi and the Viceroy, Irwin, to break the deadlock. Irwin had insisted on three conditions – federation as the basis of the Indian
Gandhi in Simla (1931)
constitution, reservations for the minorities, and safeguards for defence, external affairs and the financial credit of India. The Government offered to release political prisoners and withdraw repressive ordinances, while Gandhi agreed to suspend the civil disobedience movement and to attend the second Round Table Conference at London as the sole Congress representative. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was to be signed at Simla.

The decision that Gandhi was to come to Simla to sign the pact sent a surge of excitement through the local Congress leaders. They had agreed to a cessation of the agitation if 'a friendly reception' was given to Gandhi, i.e. a conciliatory attitude was adopted by the authorities.³⁰

Gandhi had refused to travel in a rickshaw or ride on horse-back from the railway station to Firgrove, in the eastern part of Simla,³¹ where he was to stay with Rai Bahadur Mohan Lal.³² Gandhi's preference for walking put the authorities in a difficult situation since it meant that most hill people in Simla would walk with him. It was therefore decided to permit four cars for Gandhi and his entourage to motor from the station.³³

On 15 May 1931, men, women, children and stragglers dressed in Khadi clothes and Gandhi caps took up positions along the way that the cars were to take. A brass band, banners with 'O saint of all the world', and a flutter of the Congress national flags welcomed Gandhi. The Simla Government authorities were well prepared for the occasion too. The Gandhi motorcade, together with the officers, subordinates and clerks who poured out of offices to view the visit, was followed by an Indian Red Cross mule convoy.³⁴
Congress secured another triumph, i.e. permission for Gandhiji to address the people on the Ridge. A crowd of about ten thousand assembled, as Durga Das on behalf of the Simla Trades Association, N.L. Verma, on behalf of the ‘Ahrties’ Association, and Ghulam Mohammad for Muslims, welcomed Gandhi.\textsuperscript{35}

The drama of processions, and violations of traffic laws and the Police Act on the Mall were expressions of the Congress attempts to make their presence felt. Local politicians freely admitted that they could never hope to replicate the upsurge possible in the plains. This was well understood by Vithalbhai Patel. His parting words to the crowds that saw him off at the railway station in Simla were a plea that the people of hill states should at least pray for the success of the movement. The events of 1930-31 did not however result in a stronger Congress organization.\textsuperscript{36} However, the happening were considered by local leaders as their achievement against British rule. The Indians were allowed to walk on the Mall from 1931 onwards.

The ferment caused by the happenings of 1930-31, began to trickle down to hill people and they began to make efforts to set up people’s organizations. Whenever it was not possible to do so inside the state’s territory in view of the Prince’s repression, the politically conscious workers would operate from the adjoining British territories of Simla, Dalhousie etc. to rouse the people of their states. For instance, Pt. Padam Dev of Bushahr made Simla as his headquarter to launch his struggles against the rulers of the Hill States.
The struggle of the common hill people against the oppressive and unjust rule of the Princely states in Himachal Pradesh, led to several uprisings viz. 'Dhami Goli Kand', 'Pajotha Agitation', 'Suket Satyagraha' etc., which will be discussed in detail in the ensuing pages. The main objective of the people's struggle was the democratization of the administration and introduction of social reforms for the people living in the hill areas. The hill people's struggle was thus directed with a specific object of throwing off not only the British yoke but also the rule of terror, high-handedness, slavery and feudalism of the various hill chiefs.

Thus, in the hills of Himachal Pradesh, the Praja Mandal movement contributed much to make the people of the state politically and socially awakened for active participation in the national struggle.

**Himachal and All India States People's Conference**

The first All India States People's Conference (AISPC) was convened on December 17, 1927 in Bombay and was attended by 700 delegates from all over the Indian States, however, no delegate from the Hill States attended the session. The aim of the AISPC was to influence the States as a whole to initiate the necessary reforms in the administration by the force of collective opinion of the people of the states. It worked for the democratization and liberalization of the State's administration. The abolition of the system of Princely rule, however, was far from the minds of the leaders of those days.

The AISPC encountered many difficulties in the attempts to establish its units in hill states as Princes adopted a hostile attitude to the growth of any effective and organized public opinion in their respective states. Lack of
modern means of communications and transport was another stumbling block. As a result, the popular movements in these hill states, for a long time, remained comparatively weak and sporadic. These conditions, however, could not altogether block the progress of popular movements in the States for all times to come.

However, with the rise of national freedom movement the people of these hills also began to organize themselves which led to the rise and consolidation of Praja Mandal movements in these States.

Discontentment Leads to the Formation of *Praja Mandals*

Imposition of excessive land revenue and other taxes coupled by the extraction of *begar* and *beth* were chiefly responsible for the continuous brewing of discontent against the States. This was aggravated further by the high handedness and corrupt practices of the state officials which led people to rise against the rulers. Apart from these some other factors as social backwardness, superstitions, lack of modern means of communications and transport also led people to rise against these states and the resentment was expressed in different forms which ultimately crystallized in the shape of *Praja Mandals* in the Himachal hill states. The *Praja Mandals* were organized for the attainment of democratic rights for the people in most of the states. To rouse people it undertook to organize public meetings at the different places in various Simla Hill States, collect data about injustices and cruelties perpetrated on hill people, represent their case before the political agent and the ruler through deputations and memoranda and encourage people to refuse to pay unjust taxes and perform *begar*.
The movement, no doubt, in some States was confined to certain urban sections of the people, in others, it was essentially agrarian in character. In general the movement was inspired by the Gandhian principles i.e. non-violence and only in rare circumstances did the people take to violence. The Praja Mandal, the organizations of State subjects, were organized. These are being treated here as indicators of the growth of political consciousness amongst the people of the Hill States because these gave expression to their political aspirations.

Most of Praja Mandal came up on the foundation provided by the social organizations like Chamba Sewak Sangh and Dhami Prem Pracharini Sabha which were later converted into Praja Mandal. Bushahr Praja Mandal was converted from Bushahr Sewa Mandal. Apart from these organizations in these States, people of hill states living in cities like Lahore and Delhi for earning their livelihood had also formed associations. Sirmauri Association was established in Lahore and Delhi. In Delhi, Himalayan Sewak Sangh came up aiming at awakening of the hill people to protect their culture, civic rights and socio-economic interests. These organizations were initially social bodies. However, from 1937 onwards these organizations started taking serious postures and displayed political consciousness. In course of time they converted their organizations into Praja Mandal.

In other small states the Praja Mandal were organized in later part of forties. The AISPC records show that Praja Mandal existed in all the Hill States as on 31 March 1947.
Aims of Praja Mandals

An insight into the working of the Praja Mandal reveals that people of hill states had desired long back to organize themselves on common issues. This urge of the hill people emanated from the oppressive rule of the chiefs and the British they were faced with. The aims of these organizations were to fight for the right of the subjects, foster friendship, cultivate a culture positive to the socio-economic development of the people and encourage people to refuse to pay unjust taxes and perform *begar*.

_Praja Mandals_ so organized got affiliated to an apex body, known as *Himalayan Riyasti Praja Mandal* to provide a platform for waging resistance against the ongoing oppression in these States. It was formed after a few leaders of the Hill States attended the Ludhiana Conference of All India States People’s Conference (AISPC) in 1939. _Praja Mandals_ were linked to the AISPC, which itself was organized in 1927 as apex organization of the States people’s movement.

**Formation of Himalayan States-Regional Council**

The Udaipur Conference (1946) of AISPC was an important landmark in the formation of a regional council of AISPC for Himalayan region. Consequently, Himalayan Hill States Regional Council (HHSRC) was formed at Udaipur. The elections of its office-bearers were also held at Udaipur. Under its auspices a conference was held at Mandi from 8-10 March 1946 with an aim to create a unified machinery to guide the Praja Mandal movement. This resulted in the integration of various *Praja Mandals*.

In Mandi Conference resolutions were passed to demand responsible government, abolition of *begar* and other unjustified taxes, lifting of ban on
the political organizations, unconditional release of all political prisoners, restoration of confiscated properties of Praja Mandalists and permission to the political exile to return to their respective states. The demand for the setting up of responsible government was, in fact, reaffirmation of the resolution passed by AISPC at Udaipur in 1946. The Conference asked for the use of Hindi as official language and medium of instructions in educational institutions. In another resolution it asked for the constitution of a committee of elected representative of all states on the basis of population for effective control over the activities of the administration. The rulers of the states were asked to utilize the vast natural resources in view to improve the conditions of the mass of people and also to encourage locals in business affairs. The Conference also called for abolition of unjustified levies and abolition of excessive taxation and exaction of forced labour or begar.

Thus, this conference of HHSRC was a great milestone in the growth of political consciousness and development of a political organization covering these hill states. As a result of this conference the subjects of various hill states were able to establish closer links. It also gave them an opportunity to understand and solve each other’s problems. It will be appropriate here to discuss briefly the role of Praja Mandals established in various erstwhile hill states of Himachal.

Bilaspur

Bilaspur lies between 31°12' and 31°35' and 76°26' and 76°58'E. It has an area of 448 square miles. Bilaspur lies in the outer hills of the Himalayas next to the Punjab plains and forms a part of the basin of river Sutlej which flows meandering across it for about ninety kilometers. The
ruling family of Bilaspur belonged to the Chanderbansi race and the state was founded about 900 A.D. It was originally known as Kahlur, after a fort of that name built by Raja Kahal Chand, sixteenth of his line; subsequently it was called as Kot Kahlur.49

After 1919, the state was placed in direct relationship with the Government of India through the Agent to the Governor-General for Punjab States. Thus, instead of Superintendent, Hill States, it was the Agent, who was entrusted with the supervision of the state administration. In September 1930, a serious revolt broke out in the Bilaspur state. The following were the causes of the revolt.

Firstly, the Raja Bijai Chand’s frequent visits to Benaras, where he had built two houses, remained a regular feature. Of course, on these tours, he was invariably accompanied by a large entourage. Secondly, the Raja’s long tours like tour to Ceylon from 1 November 1915 to 23 January 1916 and his visit to Burma from November 1916 to January 1917, involved lot of expenditure and were thus a strain on the state exchequer. Moreover, the Raja was not worried about the administration of his state and welfare of his subjects, but to the cultivation of his absentee interests and amusements. His long absences from the state were not conducive to good rule and encouraged insubordination and irresponsibility on the part of some state officials. They became rapacious and such conditions added to the discontent of the people who felt that these were due to the weak policy of the ruling chief.50

Raja Bijai Chand was also accused of misappropriating the War loans which had been subscribed by the Bilaspur state subjects during the First
World War. It was alleged that a part of this money the Raja had invested in the Government Promissory Notes. After the end of the First World War, although the Government of India had paid back these loans, but the Raja did not refund the money among the subscribers. This not only caused wrongful loss to the people of Bilaspur, but also damaged the prestige of the British Government by creating an impression that the loan had not been paid. In August 1930, when revolt broke out due to the land settlement in Bilaspur, this was one of the complaints of the zamindars. On being asked to explain his conduct in this matter by H.B. St. John, the Agent to the Governor-General for Punjab States, the Raja evaded giving the reply.  

Moreover, due to extravagances and mismanagement the Raja was in dire financial straits; he started borrowing money and with the passage of time, there was the accumulation of a large burden of state debt to creditors, both inside and outside Bilaspur. One of the consequences of such a state of affairs was that salaries of the state officials fell in arrears; in some cases, the salaries had not been paid for four years and even more.  

Raja Bijai Chand, realizing that under the such circumstances it was not possible for him to run the administration of state. Thus, in 1927, he requested the British Government to allow him to abdicate in favour of his son, Anand Chand, who then was a minor. In October 1927, the raja was allowed to abdicate; he returned to Benaras, where he lived till his death in November 1931. He was succeeded by his minor son, Anand Chand.
Misrule of Regency Council

During the minority of the latter, a Regency Council or Council of administration was appointed to administer the state. The Regency Council rule continued till January 1933.

Since the state was bankrupt and heavy debts were to be defrayed, the new administration paid attention to improve its financial condition. The Agent drew out a strict schedule of work and himself sanctioned the budget each year after thorough scrutiny. Further, no expenditure could be incurred by the darbar without his approval. The Council imposed nazrana on lands which had been grabbed by the hazaris and confiscated, and subsequently transferred it to the rightful heirs where such nazrana was not paid. This yielded an income of about one and a half lakh of rupees.

Further, there was increase in the existing taxes: the rate of state timber which the farmers purchased for constructing their houses, was enhanced; so also nazrana on sales and mortgages of lands was increased. The revenue on gharates (water-mills) was enhanced by 25% i.e. at the rate of four annas per rupee. The nazrana for lawarsi (escheated for failure of heirs) lands was also increased. The system of auction in lawarsi land was introduced in which even a non-agriculturist could purchase land. Heretofore, such lands were sold only to the zamindars (land owners) in degree of nearness to the deceased proprietor. A new system of levying licence fees for fishing was introduced. Sheep and goat tax was levied in the villages where there was no cherand (common grazing area) and where the zamindars grazed their sheep and goats in their own private kharetars.
(grazing lands). The system of auctioning the nautor (newly broken land for cultivation) land was also introduced for the first time.

Hitherto, nazrana on nautor land was indicated, and before sanctioning applications for this purpose, the common area available in the village for grazing purposes was taken into consideration; where grazing area was insufficient, no nautor was sanctioned. Finally, in order to increase the state income, another obnoxious measure was introduced: when women lodged application for permission to re-marry, they were first asked to bring a separate suit in the courts for lag (compensation) money. This was unlike the previous practice when the courts assessed the amount of lag before giving permission for re-marriage.\(^58\)

Income tax was levied for the first time in the state during Raja Anand Chand. The council also prohibited fishing without licence and imposed many other taxes.\(^59\) All these measures added to the resentment of the people who were already sick of maladministration in the state.

The immediate cause of the discontentment, however, was the new land settlement. The First Regular Settlement was introduced in 1908, and the next one was due in 1928. The Regency Council hoped that it would result in an increase of about Rs.50,000 per year, thus improving the finances of the state. The people of Bilaspur, like other hill states, were paying heavy and unjust taxes and rendering the services of unpaid labour, begar. The farmers were apprehensive of big increase in the land revenue when the settlement work commenced in 1930.

The protest movement against the excesses of the state authorities was started by the farmers of the Bahadurpur pargana who refused to supply
free fire-wood to the revenue staff working in their villages. The people also raised their voice against the unjust and high rate of nazrana, fishing licence and rude behaviour of the revenue staff, some of whom were accused of molesting the village ladies. As a result of the failure of the authorities to satisfy the people, the unrest developed into an organized rising against the unjust and unfair impositions of the Regency Council.  

In order to deal with the situation, J.A.O. Fitzpatrick, Agent to the Governor-General Punjab States, reached Bilaspur on October 3, 1930. After discussions with his Secretary, Rai Bahadur Dewan Gyan Nath and the Council, he held a Darbar at Bilaspur on 5 October 1930. At the meeting, a proclamation was drawn up dealing chronologically with the points raised by the zamindars. In the first part of the proclamation threats and warnings were issued to those people, who participated in the agitation. The people were also warned that necessary arrangements had been made to send troops to Bilaspur if a state of unrest continued in order to deal with the rebellious people. If after the proclamation, any attempt was made to interfere with the settlement works of the state, then the agitators will have to bear the consequences: in addition to suffering personal hardship, the rebellious villages would then have to bear the entire expenses which the state would have to incur on troops.

Fitzpatrick also heard grievances of the people and assured them that the rights of the zamindars as Ağna (inferior) Malik and that of the Ruler as Ala (superior) Malik as given in the last settlement report of 1908 would not be curtailed. Further, in order to remove the misgivings of the zamindars, the patwaris were ordered to select the best fields for crop experiments instead of
general, average and bad fields; the Settlement Officer and the Assistant Settlement Officer were also directed to satisfy themselves by spot inspection. Both the officers while on tour were asked to listen to the grievances of the zamindars as also to their complaints against the patwaris. Unlike hithertofore, the above officers were directed to be easily accessible to the people during their village tours.

The British Agent to the Governor further assured the people that increase in revenue after the settlement would not be arbitrary and it will be according to rules. Fitzpatrick, in the end mentioned that if the state subjects behaved well and lived peacefully and co-operated in the settlement work, their grievances would be sympathetically considered. However, he remarked that while giving these concessions, the Government would not order any curtailment of the rights of the (minor) Raja Anand Chand.

However, when the state officials restarted settlement work in October 1930, there was violent opposition from the zamindars. They put all kinds of hindrances in the way of revenue staff. In this juncture, the state council asked for armed police form the Agent. Fitzpatrick further requested the Punjab Governor to send some armed troops to the Bilaspur State. The Governor of Punjab felt that unrest in Bilaspur appeared to be widespread and needed to be suppressed immediately. Therefore, he decided to send fifty armed police with five Head Constables and a Sub-Inspector. The Punjab Government also laid down the condition that the Government of India would accept the responsibility for the cost involved in sending police force to Bilaspur and for their pay and allowances during the period of their
absence from the Punjab. The Punjab police contingent reached Bilaspur on November 10, 1930.65

On November 11, 1930, Dewan Gyan Nath, at the head of the Punjab Armed Police, local irregulars and state police, and Bilaspur state officials marched into the interior villages of Bahadurpur pargana to deal with the rebels. The police arrested thirteen ringleaders, and those who offered opposition to arrest, were brought to Bilaspur where they were imprisoned in the Central jail. However, the rebels attacked the jail and got the prisoners released. Sir Edward Wakefield, who replaced Gyan Nath in the last week of November 1930, tells us that Gyan Nath was having brittle temper and had been fired on by the rebels, and had barely escaped with his life.66 Gyan Nath got panicky and he telegraphed to the Agent that the people of the affected villages were not impressed by this action and presence of armed police, and the state council was of the opinion that Company of Infantry, preferably Gurkhas, should immediately be sent to Bilaspur to restore prestige and defend capital if necessary, from threatening raid by the rebel zamindars.67

On 12 November 1930, about 400 men armed with lathis (sticks) reached Bilaspur and demanded the release of the prisoners. As more men were reported to be coming and the meeting was considered of unlawful character, the local magistrate ordered them to disperse. On their refusal to do so, they were mercilessly lathi-charged and dispersed by the Punjab police. Many persons were wounded including some policemen. The ringleaders were arrested on the spot and placed on trial.68
Realizing that the situation had passed beyond the stage at which armed police could deal with it, the Government of India ordered the Area Commander, Ambala to send troops to the Bilaspur state. The area commander immediately arranged 120 soldiers and sent to Bilaspur. On 21 November 1930, they reached Bilaspur under the control of two British officers namely Captain J. Smyth and Lieutenant T.C. Lewis.

After the arrival of the armed troops, situation in the state started improving. Illegal meetings being held by the zamindars stopped and they showed inclination to co-operate with the state officials. The state authorities restarted settlement works for which there was no opposition now and also took steps to collect arrears which had not been paid by the zamindars during the past few months. Fifty two ringleaders were arrested and property of twenty six leaders who absconded, was confiscated.69

After peace was restored in the Bilaspur State, armed troops were withdrawn on 29 December 1930. By 31 December 1930, the Bilaspur state court concluded the trial of forty nine rebel leaders who were arrested by the state. The sentence given to these leaders by the court varies from one month to seven years according to their offence.70

Apparently, the revolt in Bilaspur was due to maladministration and misrule of the Raja Bijai Chand. Secondly, he lived extravagantly and this strained the royal treasury. Thirdly, the people of Bahadurpur worked as labourer for their livelihood at Simla in great number. In 1930 at Simla someone or the other national leaders of the congress (Vithalbhai Patel, Gandhiji etc.) would often visit, by listening to their speeches they were imbibed with nationalistic feelings, this was also one of the reasons for their
revolt. The state however, suppressed the agitation with the help of the Punjab police and troops.

**Role of the Local Organizations and Bilaspur Praja Mandal**

To free themselves from the grip of Raja's personal rule, the people of Bilaspur, formed some social organizations like the *Sewa Samiti* and *Sanatan Dharam Sabha*. Although the purpose of these organizations were social and religious uplift of the masses, yet the meetings of these organizations were also utilized for discussions on political matters. In 1945, after their return from AISPC at Udaipur, some young workers like Daulat Ram Sankhyan, Narotam Dutt Shastri and Devi Ram Upadhayay, organized the Bilaspur *Rajya Praja Mandal* with its headquarters at Simla. According to Narotam Dutt Shastri, Bilaspur *Praja Mandal* issued a number of tracts and pamphlets pinpointing the deterioration of the situation as a result of the absence of civil liberties in Bilaspur.

The workers of the newly organized Praja Mandal mobilized the people of the state and decided to launch an agitation against the state authorities for the protection of their fundamental rights. To achieve their objects the Praja Mandal leaders in June 1946, marched from Simla to Bilaspur to present their case before the Raja. But on reaching the state boundary near Nalag, they found their way barred by a police force of about three hundred strong with the Raja Anand Chand as its head. The *satyagrahis* were attacked and beaten mercilessly and they had to take shelter in a village named Chhamla in Arki State.

The agitation for a democratic set-up in Bilaspur state, however, continued unabated. The Praja Mandal workers, in a memorandum
submitted to the Raja Anand Chand, requested him to declare "the termination of the policy of negation of civil liberties and repression by 21 September 1946, after which date in the event of failure, they shall be constrained to adopt all non-violent methods to achieve our birth right." A report was also sent to the AISPC about the atrocities of the raja and the deteriorating situation in the state. The standing committee of the AISPC on 27 December, 1946 showed its deep concern about the repressive policies of the Bilaspur government and the denial of civil liberties and fundamental rights to its people.\textsuperscript{75}

The Raja, however, did not allow any one from outside to study the real situation within the state and whosoever attempted to enter the state was arrested. Satya Dev Bushahri and Budhisagar, prominent workers of Praja Mandal were arrested on 14 December 1947, while attempting to enter the Bilaspur State.\textsuperscript{76}

When India attained freedom on 15 August 1947, Bilaspur chief Anand Chand declared himself as the king of Azad Kahlur and raised an army called the \textit{Swadheen Kahlur Dal}.\textsuperscript{77} In March 1948, after the merger of the Suket\textsuperscript{78} and several other hill states followed suit and signed the merger documents. The Raja of Bilaspur, however, refused to merge his state in the newly formed Himachal Pradesh. The Bilaspur people waited for another six months even after the formation of Himachal Pradesh as a separate state. When nothing came out of negotiations, the members of the Praja Mandal decided to launch a \textit{satyagraha}. A march was organized from Simla and from the neighbouring territories of Kangra and Una. When some of the
processionists entered, the state near the Sutlej bridge at Kandror, they were attacked by the state forces.\textsuperscript{79}

Meanwhile, Sardar Patel sent his representative Kaushik, Secretary AISPC to Bilaspur. Realizing that his days were numbered, Raja Anand Chand signed the merger document on 12 October 1948,\textsuperscript{80} and his state was integrated with the Union of India as a Part 'C' state.\textsuperscript{81} On the State's merger, the Raja was appointed as the first Chief Commissioner by the Government of India. The final merger of Bilaspur State was executed in 1954 when it became one of the districts of Himachal Pradesh.

**Bushahr**

Bushahr state was the largest of the Simla Hill States. It was bounded on the north by Spiti, on the east by Tibet, on the south by Tehri Garhwal and Keonthal, and on the west by Kotgarh, Kotkhai, Kumarsain and Kullu. Its capital was Rampur.\textsuperscript{82}

Before independence, Bushahr was included in the Simla Hill States and the people of this state too, as in case of other states, were burdened with numerous levies and exactions. The high-handedness of Padam Singh, the Raja of Bushahr, together with the negative attitude of the British authorities, encouraged the people of the state to raise their voice against the excesses of the native ruler under the guidance of Pt. Padam Dev, Satya Dev Bushahri and other Praja Mandal workers.

The *Himalayan Riyasti Praja Mandal* (which was formed in December 1939), took up the responsibility of directing the activities of the political and social workers in the various hill states. It held public meetings at various
places whereby people were encouraged to refuse to pay the unjust taxes and perform *begar* to the rulers of hill states.

**Kolis Raise Their Voice**

The lawful and genuine grievances of the *Kolis*\(^3\) of Simla Hill States, led by Pt. Padam Dev\(^4\) were placed before the political agent during the latter’s visit to Simla in May 1939. The Kolis in a petition to Political Agent said, “If all the Zamindars of high castes had to pay the said toll tax (Rs. four as compensation for exemption from *Athwara begar*) petitioners would not be a separate group and would have paid with others. But a distinction based merely on the unfortunate accident of their birth amongst the depressed classes, is not the one, which the petitioners can except the suzerain power to uphold even in an age which knows no difference between man and man except according to their merit in real worth. To wipe away this irrational distinction we will exert every hair of our body to save our progeny from the permanent effect of a stigma of economic nature such as exists nowhere”.\(^5\)

The above petition not only gives an insight into the efforts of the Praja Mandalists to educate the people for protection of their fundamental rights and civil liberties, but also gives an indication as to how the depressed and the neglected hill people began to register their protest against the excesses of the state’s rulers.

**Role of Bushahr Praja Mandal**

Due to unrest among the *Kolis* in hill states resulting from the encouragement and instigation by the Praja Mandal members, the British authorities lost no time in warning the rulers of the various states confidentially about the possibility of further unrest and agitation. The
administration of the Bushahr state was disturbed greatly due to the propaganda of the workers of the Bushahr Praja Mandal led by Pt. Padam Dev. The Political Agent said, "Copies of hand bill have been distributed by the so-called Bushahr State Praja Mandal, Simla, in which certain demands have been expressed on behalf of Bushahris".  

During the Second World War, Bhai Do, Na Pa movement was launched by the Praja Mandal all over the hill states. Severe repression by the authorities followed, leading to the suppression of the activities of the Praja Mandal for some time.

Unfortunately, the Bushahr Praja Mandal was divided into two factions from the very start. In 1945, Satya Dev Bushahr organized a Bushahr Praja Mandal with its headquarters at Rampur whereas the other organization of the same name led by Pt. Padam Dev continued to operate from Simla as before. During this period other organizations like Bushahr Sudhar Sammelan, Sewak Mandal, and Bushahr Prem Sabha were also organized by the people of Rampur Bushahr. The Bushahr Praja Mandal (Satya Dev group) launched a Satyagraha in November 1946 which resulted in the arrest of all the Praja Mandal workers in Rampur jail. The jail, however, was stormed by a mob of ten thousand which compelled the administration to release all the satyagrahis unconditionally. Apart from the plight of the mass of people on the question of rent and taxes, one of the notable feature in Bushahr State was resistance coming from the State employees.

Bushahr witnessed serious agitation before 15 August 1947. The state administration deteriorated which led to grave discontentment among the state subjects. The State constituted an Interim Council in May 1947
under Jagan Nath Joshi and by the month of July a superstructure was added to it in the form of a Board of Regency. But it did not find favour with the subjects. Thakur Sen Negi came forward with a constitution for Bushahr State so as to meet the demands of the democratization and modernization of state administration and grant responsible government in the state under the aegis of the Durbar.91

The immediate cause of unrest, however, was the arrest warrant issued to Anu Lal, General Secretary of Bushahr Praja Mandal who was charged with collecting revenue from the Gujjars for grazing in the state pastures as against a compromise which was reached earlier with the nomads and the Praja Mandal led peasantry. State termed these collections as extortions. Anu Lal was rescued by a mob of peasants at Gaura and they held the whole police party as hostage. The mob got angry on getting news that state police had beaten the courier of a telegram from Anu Lal to AISPC.92

Though the police party was later on released, the mob captured the state offices on March 17, 1948 at Rampur with an aim to form provisional government. However, the excessive state retaliation on 20 March 1948, led by Sardar Baldev Singh led to fizzling out of the seize and many died as they jumped into Sutlej river to save themselves from the barbaric police attack. One important feature of this movement was the predominant participation by the Kolis.93

However, when the Interim Council decided to hold elections for Vidhan Parishad in October 1947 the Praja Mandal led by Satya Dev Bushahri decided to co-operate and contest the elections. It called off its
Satyagraha. In the election of Vidhan Parishad, the Praja Mandalists led by Bushahri, won all the seats. Now the Praja Mandal leaders called upon the Council of Regency for a session of the assembly failing which it was threatened that Satyagraha will be launched and taxes will not be paid. It also called upon the State’s Ministry of Government to intervene. The Bushahr Praja Mandal finally succeeded to achieve its goal for the establishment of a responsible government and democratizing its administrative machinery. Due to their mounting pressure, the state was annexed to India and became a part of Himachal Pradesh on April 15, 1948.

Chamba

Erstwhile Chamba State had an area of 3,216 square miles and a population 146,872 at the census of 1931. It was situated in the bosom of the Himalaya Mountains. It was bounded on the north-west and west by Jammu and Kashmir, on the north-east and east by Ladakh, Lahaul and Bara Bangahal, and on the south-east and south by the districts of Kangra and Gurdaspur. Its capital was Chamba.

The subjects of Chamba State continued to suffer under the autocratic rule till the early years of the twentieth century. In 1922, the Chamba State subjects, working in Lahore and other towns of the Punjab, represented to the British Government for the protection of their fundamental rights and realization of their lawful demands. When the pressure mounted, the British Government directed its chief, Raja Ram Singh to set up an Advisory Council, with a view to satisfy the people and to establish direct link between the Government and the State subjects.
A few exiles viz., Gian Chand, Sardar Gurbachan Singh and Devi Chand form Chamba State organized 'Chamba People's Defence League' with its headquarters at Lahore in 1932. They enrolled subjects of Chamba employed or receiving education as its members. The organization not only supported their demand for grant of civil liberties but also educated the state subjects about their economic rights. Another social organization called *Chamba Sewak Sangh* was established in 1936 with the aim of assistance to the victims of a devastating fire in Chamba city. Being a social organization, it was recognized and allowed to carry on its social activities.\(^97\)

With the passage of time, this organization diverted its activities in political field by pleading the cause of depressed classes and forced the state administration to redress their grievances like reduction in the rate of land revenue, abolition of *begar*, improvement of means of communication, increased medical and educational facilities, democratization of administrative machinery and the establishment of a responsible government.\(^98\)

The *Chamba Sewak Sangh* concentrated its attack on the nepotism indulged in by the *wazir* Madho Ram and highlighted his underhand means to acquire, retain and concentrate all the powers of the state in his own hands. *Wazir* Madho Ram's autocratic actions turned the majority of the people against the state. The *Chamba Sewak Sangh* wrote to Gandhiji and asked him to intervene as people's lot kept deteriorating.\(^99\) Gandhi testified to the strength of the people movement in Chamba when he asked the British government to give up the policy of non-interference because the growing political consciousness among the people of state would no longer tolerate
the denial of share in the State’s administration. He called upon the people of Chamba to publish “unvarnished facts about state of things there”.

An editorial in *The Tribune* stated, “There is awakening even on the sleepy hollow of Chamba. Democratic ideas have percolated through the hilly barriers into the State and the people who have readily imbibed them are clamouring for responsible government”. Thus, it is clear that the popular movement in Chamba State was widespread and deep. The *Chamba Sewak Sangh* drew the attention not only of the Congress leaders but also the British government by submitting a lengthy memorandum to the Political Agent.

It was not surprising, therefore, that due to its political activities, the *Chamba Sewak Sangh* was banned by the State authorities and its prominent leaders were arrested and sentenced to long term imprisonments in jail. The State also passed ‘The Chamba Registration of Association Act’ in 1939 to suppress the activities of the *Sewak Sangh*. The people and workers of the *Sangh*, however, continued their agitation from Dalhousie, a nearby town in the British territory.

**Chamba Riyasti Praja Mandal**

*Chamba Riyasti Praja Mandal* was organized and it sent a delegation to attend the AISPC session held at Ludhiana in 1939. The members of delegation were Vidya Sagar, Vidya Dhar, Ghulam Rasool and Prithi Chand. The Praja Mandal thus helped the people of Chamba State in uniting them in the form of an organization with a view to carry on the struggle. Resolutions were passed for the grant of fundamental rights and civil liberties.

Sensing the mood of the people, the state authorities revoked the ‘Registration of Societies Act’ towards the end of 1944. The Praja Mandal
carried on its agitation for the grant of responsible government in Chamba State till its ruler Raja Lakshman Singh signed the merger document and ceded his state to the Indian Government on March 8, 1948 after which Chamba became a separate district of the modern state of Himachal Pradesh.

Dhami

Dhami, a small state in the Simla hills was situated about 16 miles west of Simla town. The state had an area of 28 square miles and its population in 1931 was 5,239.

Dhami State was one of those states which saw the organized resistance of the subjects. The people of Dhami united and formed an association named Shri Dhami Prem Pracharni Sabha in 1937 which had membership of several hundreds. It held several meetings and sent requests to its chief Rana Dalip Singh for the recognition of the Sabha, but failed to get any acknowledgement for their correspondences. This request of the Sabha was neglected at a time when trouble was brewing for long over the rent and revenue in the Dhami State. Initially, this organization worked for the social uplift of the masses but after two years in 1939 changed into a political organization under the name Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal and shifted its centre form Dhami to Simla for political activities.

Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal

In July 13, 1939, Shri Dhami Prem Pracharni Sabha held a meeting at Imperial Hotel, Simla which was attended by six hundred people and passed number of resolutions. In the first resolution the name of the Sabha was changed from Shri Dhami Prem Pracharni Sabha to the Dhami Riyasti Praja
Pt. Sita Ram showing the papers of Dhami firing tragedy and satyagraha to Mrs. Indira Gandhi
Mandal. The other resolutions demanded the establishment of a full responsible government in Dhami, grant of civil liberties, rights of free speech and platform to the public, fifty percent remission in land revenue as there had been constant crop failures for the last three years (1937-39), abolition of begar (forced labour), restoration of the confiscated land of exiled subjects and recognition of the Praja Mandal.

The above charter of demands was presented by Sita Ram, Secretary, Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal, before its ruler Rana Dalip Singh on July 14, 1939 and requested that a reply be given immediately. The month of July was intentionally selected for the action as revenue collection was generally made in the month of August. The Rana was also told that in case no reply fixing any dates for the interview was received, a deputation of state subjects led by Thakur Bhag Mal Sauhta, General Secretary, Himalaya Riyâsti Praja Mandal would proceed to Dhami on 16 July 1939, to place the grievances to the subjects before him. As there was no reply from Rana, a deputation under the leadership of Bhag Mal Sauhta marched towards Dhami on the fixed date (16 July 1939). Meanwhile an order under Section 144 C.P.C. requiring him not to enter the state was passed on 15 July 1939. When he reached the border at Ghanna-Ki-Hatti, he was stopped by the Dhami state police and shown the order prohibiting his entry into the state. He refused to obey the order and was arrested and taken to Halog, the capital of the Dhami State.¹⁰⁹

Further, the crowd which accompanied him formed a procession and followed them. A large crowd of about 2000 to 3000 people both state and non-state subjects reached Halog. As they approached Halog, it was met
first by some elders sent out by the Rana Dalip Singh to say that if his subjects had grievances, the Rana was prepared to meet them. The crowd came towards the Darbar where it was met by Kunwar Rattan Singh, younger brother of Rana, with a similar message. A written message was then sent to the Rana asking him to receive a deputation under the leadership of Hira Singh, a non-state subject. Bhag Mal Sauhta who had been arrested by the police was taken towards thana. At this moment he was surrounded by a large crowd who got excited. It shouted anti-police slogans, and advanced towards police. Then ensued a skirmish between the crowd and the loyal police and puppets of the Dhami ruler, in which stones and lathis (sticks) were used by both sides. Seeing that the situation had become dangerous, the Magistrate gave the order to the police to open fire.

The Dhami firing tragedy proved a turning point in hill people’s struggle for social and political reforms. The national leaders, Pt. Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, were informed about the tragic happenings who condemned the firing and directed the standing committee of the Congress and All India States People’s Conference to hold an inquiry.

AISPC constituted an inquiry committee headed by Duni Chand, Member of Punjab Legislative Assembly, with Shri Dev Suman an AISPC leader as its secretary. The Committee submitted its report to Nehru on 30 July 1939. Duni Chand made request to examine Rana Dalip Singh and requested R.R. Burnett, Political Agent to advise the Rana to get examined by the committee. However, the request was turned down.

The Committee was of the opinion that "Conditions in smaller States, particularly in Hill States will not improve unless they are grouped together as
a separate unit and deprived of much of their powers and the administration
is placed in the hands of independent administrative bodies and High Courts
are appointed to administer justice. The Simla Hill States and many other
small States in the Punjab enjoy different measures of power and authority in
dealing with their subjects and it will be well to bring such states under the
judicial and administrative control of government in which they are
situated". Among other things the report condemned the willful provocation
by the State and also accused the Praja Mandalists for showing haste in
organizing their protest. The committee asked AISPC to pay its early
attention to the plight of the subjects living in these States.

Reactions to the Dhami Firing Incident

The Dhami agitation drew the attention of the national leadership to
the state of affairs in the hill states and Pt. Nehru asked S. Dhawan to inquire
and make comprehensive assessment of land revenue system, living
conditions of subjects, the position of women and extent of civic rights
enjoyed by the people. He termed Dhami as symbol of repression in Indian
States in the shadow and active help of Simla. He also asked for judicial
inquiry into Dhami incident as Dhami and Simla would be judged together
and condemned together.

Gandhiji also felt concerned about the incident and asked Nehru to
intervene with a feeling that Congress was being neglected by these states
and desired that Praja Mandal should not go for action without the consent
of Nehru. He asked Paramount Power to deprive chiefs of the powers of
which they did not know judicious use. He remarked the incident as 'haste'
by the people and resented the lead provided to them by the outsider.
Regarding the 'haste' on the part of the people, Nehru warned: "To the people of Hill States and their leaders I should like to give a note of warning. They must not act precipitatively and any act must be fully considered and advice taken before it is undertaken. It must be less of shooting and more of quite of organization and concentrate on immediate issues. They must concentrate first of all on the abolition of begar or forced labour and other illegal exactions must go immediately. They should then seek relief from the burden of land revenue and establish civil liberties. The small states in the hills are tiny units which cannot continue as such, nor can the real progress come to them as long as they do not become parts of much larger units."^\textsuperscript{120}

The above statement of Pt. Nehru made it clear that the Praja Mandals were not well equipped organizationally to take lead on the focal problems of the State subjects and lacked clear understanding of strategies to fight the battle against land relations and secure civil liberties. Nehru also remarked that the Dhami tragedy was one face of imperialism and stressed that States people's organizations should become efficient and source of inspiration and help in building up of people's movement in the States.^\textsuperscript{121}

Lower Rank Employees and Dhami Tragedy

The Dhami tragedy brought in open the contribution made to the Praja Mandal movements by the lower rank employees of different government offices posted at Simla. They helped in organizing meetings, distribution of the pamphlets brought by the Praja Mandals and bridged the activities of the Mandals between Simla, the centre of these activities and the rural areas of the surrounding hill states as they belonged to these states and travelled
home on weekends.\textsuperscript{122} Most of the work undertaken by them was under the
guise of \textit{Sewa Samitis} which apparently had non-political character.

The political authorities conducted a special survey to ascertain
identity of those who had participated in Dhami agitation by checking their
entries at Jutogh barrier on July 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1939.\textsuperscript{123} The lower rank
employees like peons, \textit{daftris} (office attendants), \textit{malis} (gardeners), working
in Simla belonged to the adjoining states viz., Dhami, Bhajji, Baghal and
Keonthal. The contribution of the lower rank staff of government in the
popularization of Praja Mandal message and strengthening its organization
led the political authorities to come down heavily on the employees by
imposing service conduct rules and many faced dismissals from their
services and were also debarred from seeking fresh government services.\textsuperscript{124}
Most of them belonged to the Brahman and Rajput communities.

Meanwhile, the agitation against the high incidence of land revenue
and \textit{begar} continued unabated. The Resident observed, “Now that Dhami
Darbar’s authority has been openly defied and their police attacked, drastic
action will clearly have to be taken”.\textsuperscript{125} The agitation spread to numerous
\textit{parganas} namely Seon, Bari, Parech, Nehrwar, Damhr and Kamrehr and the
Punjab police assisted the Rana in crushing the people’s movement. The
\textit{Seon} \textit{pargana} and numerous other villages were garrisoned and a number of
leaders were captured along with arms and ammunition. The people’s
movement inside the Dhami State gradually subsided with the arrest of its
prominent leaders.\textsuperscript{126}

Whatever the other results of the Dhami firing tragedy may be, it
cannot be denied that the tragic event exposed the miserable conditions not
only in Dhami State but in other hill states also. The event occupies an
important place in the growth of social and political consciousness amongst
the hill people of Himachal Pradesh.

**Kunihar**

Kunihar, a small state in Simla hills with an area of 7 square miles was
situated about 18 miles west of Simla town. Its population in 1941 was
20,611.127

Like Dhami, the people of Kunihar raised their voice against the
excesses of the ruler. They established *Kunihar Praja Mandal* in 1939 but it
was banned soon after it formation by Rana Hardev Singh and its workers
were arrested. A deputation of the *Kunihar Praja Mandal* led by Pt. Padam
Dev, presented a charter of demands before the Rana on 8 July 1939
demanding the release of the arrested workers, 25% reduction in the land
revenue, official recognition of the *Kunihar Praja Mandal* and the formation of
an administrative reforms committee for the introduction of social, economic
and political reforms in the state.128

However, on 9 July 1939, the *Praja Mandal* called a *jalsal* (conference).
It was interestingly attended also by the subjects of adjoining states of Bhajji,
Baghal, Mahlog, Dhami and Nalagarh. The Kunihar Rana sensing the mood
of the people and finding his position very weak, accepted the demands for
the smooth running of the administration in the state. He announced the
release of arrested *Praja Mandal* workers and lifted the ban from Praja
Mandal. He also announced 25% cut in taxes and conceded the demand to
constitute Rulers Reform Committee to initiate steps to start reforms for the
welfare of the subjects.129
It may be mentioned here that the revolutionary activities in the adjoining Dhami State and the meager resources of the state had also made the position of the Rana helpless. The Praja Mandal leaders thus succeeded in achieving their goal of a responsible government in Kunihar without much struggle.

**Mandi**

Mandi State has an area of 1200 square miles and a population 23,25,993 (as per 1941 census). Its capital was Mandi. It was bounded on the north by Kullu and Kangra, on the east by Kullu, on the south by Suket, and on the west by Kangra.130

The erstwhile state of Mandi remained a centre of revolutionary activities since the early years of the twentieth century. In Mandi the popular movements were initially influenced by the Ghadarites who came from Punjab though their impact was limited, made the people of Mandi conscious of their rights both politically and socially.

The members of the Ghadr Party; some of whom namely Surjan Singh, Nama, Dalip Singh and Nidhan Singh had taken shelter for safety in Mandi and Suket, further inspired the people of the state for revolutionary activities. The one month long strike by the Mandi Praja Mandal workers in 1936 led to the arrest of its several leaders including Swami Purna Nand, Baldev Chand, Ram Chander and Mahashay Hari Sukh.131

The agitation against the state exploitation continued under the leaders like Swami Purna Nand, Tej Singh, Gauri Prasad, Vikram Singh, Thakur Kashmir Singh, Keshab Chander and Padam Nabh. The office of the Himalayan Hill States Regional Council was also set up in Mandi under the
presidentship of Swami Purna Nand. However, by 1945 organized movements came up in Mandi State. The Mandi Praja Mandal started a satyagraha for the upgradation of a high school and it claimed a huge membership of five thousand.\textsuperscript{132}

Although India had attained independence in 1947, the chief of Mandi continued its hold over the state and let loose a reign of terror. Several workers including Padam Nabh were arrested. When the Praja Mandal workers assembled near Balh Rati Thana to protest against the arrests, they were fired. Two persons died on the spot and several others were injured. Finally, Raja Joginder Sen agreed to form a ministry which included the Praja Mandal leaders also. The so-called ministry of Praja Mandal, however, lasted for only 40 days.\textsuperscript{133} However, its members were ultimately successful in achieving their aim of the merger of Mandi State in Himachal Pradesh in 1948.

**Sirmaur**

Sirmaur was bounded on the north by the states of Balsan and Jubbal, on the east by the Dehradun district of United Province, on the south by the Kalsia State and Ambala district, and on the west by the states of Patiala and Keonthal. Its area was 1,141 square miles and Nahan was the capital of the state.\textsuperscript{134}

Maharaja Rajendra Prakash, the last ruler of Sirmaur State ascended the throne on 22 November 1933. During the European tour of Maharaja Amar Prakash, father of Maharaja Rajendra Prakash, the administration of the state was placed in the hands of council. The heir-apparent Maharaja Rajendra Prakash was given some practical training in administration in
different states. However, the Raja was not worried about the administration of his state and welfare of his subjects, but to the cultivation of his absentee interests and amusements. The rajtilak ceremony of Maharaja Rajendra Prakash was however, performed on 13th February 1935.\textsuperscript{135}

The person who emerged as the most powerful man in the State was Ram Gopal Abhi, the then finance and revenue minister. In December 1942, Abhi was also incharge of many departments such as Finance, Forests, Agriculture Development, Education, local self government and police. He was reported to have influence on the Maharaja's mother and the real power in the state rested with him. In addition, the subjects of Sirmaur had many grievances, which related chiefly to land revenue rate, forest rights, damage caused by wild animals and begar. At the new settlement which was completed in 1932, the land revenue of the Pachhad Tehsil was increased by eighteen percent over the former demand. Thus, due to new settlement discontent among the people was apprehended on the example of other Simla Hill States such as Bilaspur.\textsuperscript{136}

It was under such conditions as mentioned above the Sirmaur Praja Mandal\textsuperscript{137} was organized in Nahan in 1939 to carry on the struggle in an organized way. The prominent leaders of Sirmaur Praja Mandal were Chaudhary Sher Jang,\textsuperscript{138} Shiva Nand Ramaul, Devinder Singh, Nagendra Singh, Rajendra Dutt, Hitendra Singh, Hari Chand and Kishan Singh.

Further, like many other hill states, the Sirmaur State also declared the Praja Mandal an unlawful body. Thus, the Praja Mandalists made Dehradun, which was in the United Province and a British territory, as their base for propaganda in Nahan. The State used all tricks to put down the movement.
In a bid to crush the political activities of Praja Mandal, its leaders were charged falsely in a conspiracy to murder the ruler and arrested Divender Singh, Harish Chander, Nahar Singh and Jagbandan Singh. They were put up before the Court of District and Session Judge. The Session Judge, Yashwant Singh Parmar, however, discharged the accused in the conspiracy case. Parmar’s judgement displeased Raja Rajendra Prakash and the other case regarding the throwing stones on the Raja with intent to kill him was, thereafter, transferred from his court to a special tribunal which convicted the accused.  

Yashwant Singh Parmar, who was then District and Session Judge of Sirmaur State, resigned from his service in 1941 owing to political differences with Raja Rajendra Prakash. He was exiled from the State. After leaving his home in 1941, Yashwant Singh Parmar organized the *Sirmaur Association* in 1943-46 in Delhi to mobilize the Sirmauris to fight for their democratic rights. Besides organizing political activities amongst the people of Sirmaur, he also carried on this work amongst the people of other states residing in Delhi.

The Pajhota Andolan

In September 1939, the Second World War started and in the Sirmaur State, many recruitment centres were opened. The suppression and exploitation reached a high pitch in 1942 when the war efforts of the State authorities began with the object of collecting money and foodstuffs. It also imposed restrictions on the hoarding and sale of food grains and other commodities outside the state. Further, it introduced registration and licensing of arms and imposed ban on arms being carried in the state. In Pajhota *pargana* which formed part of the Pachhad Tehsil (Sirmaur), was,
Satyagrahis of Pajhota Andolan
comparatively, a more fertile and productive part of the State, authorities resorted to heavy fine for petty offences and there were instances where fines and land revenue was collected twice.\textsuperscript{141} Representations of the people went unheeded. The result was that the anti-state movement spread in Pajhota pargana.

Inspired by the on going Quit India Movement, in October 1942 a large number of people of Pajhota region gathered at Taproli on some common demands and organized \textit{Kisan Sabha}\textsuperscript{142} under the leadership of Vaid Surat Singh and the other Praja Mandal workers namely Laxmi Singh, Chunchu Ram, Gulab Singh, Mehar Singh, Madan Singh etc. also played prominent role. Thus, the \textit{Kisan} movement started under the aegis of Praja Mandal and led by Vaid Surat Singh in October, 1942 is popularly known as the ‘Pajhota Andolan’.

\textbf{The Role of Kisan Sabha}

The \textit{Sabha} resolved to boycott state courts, non-payment of excessive taxes\textsuperscript{143} and not to co-operate with state officials and resigned the official posts viz. \textit{zaildars, lambardars} and took oath not to stand witness in the false cases instituted by the state against fellow peasants. It also demanded if not all, at least one minister to be included in the ministry, who shall be selected by the people (It was called ‘Wanted Ministry’ by \textit{Kisan Sabha}), construction of bridges over Giri river and opening up of new schools. These aims and objectives were recorded in the minutes of meeting by Vaid Surat Singh and its one copy was sent to the Maharaja Rajendra Prakash for his perusal.\textsuperscript{144} There was no mention of setting up a parallel government by the \textit{Kisan Sabha} in defiance of their ruler.
In the last week of October, 1942 Vaid Surat Singh and other prominent workers of *Kisan Sabha* undertook an extensive tour of Pajhota Valley (present Rajgarh sub-Tehsil), to explain to the public the objective of the *Kisan Sabha* and to seek their enlistment in the movement. Within a short period, the entire Pajhota valley was engulfed by the movement. Like any other movement, this too had its elements of moderates and extremists. The former were led by Vaid Surat Singh and the latter, much larger in number, by Mians of Pajhota, who, apart from being militant, had to their credit, the unsavoury reputation of indulging in opium smuggling. It was perhaps on account of the encouragement given by the Mians that some of the agitators started looting houses of those whom they considered as working against their interest, as a result of dire provocation, given by the State forces during Martial law regime. Whatever were the designs of the organizers of the *Kisan Sabha*, it is obvious that soon a large number of its supporters, who were mostly uneducated and emotional, became uncontrollable as far as control of the moderates was concerned.

At the instance of Pt. Ram Swarup, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Sirmaur State decided to send a force of nearly 35 police constables under his charge along with Sub-Inspector Tulsi Ram and Nand Lal, with instructions to suppress the movement and effect the arrest of its ringleaders. This force arrived at village Dhamla on the 9th of Posh, 1999 (December 1942), from Rajgarh via Habban. The boycott of the Government officials was so effective that this punitive force had to return to Rajgarh, within four days of its arrival at Dhamla, as no provisions were made available to them by the local population. This force had also failed to effect
the arrests of the ringleaders, as it appears they were thwarted in their efforts by the agitators, who assembled in hundreds on hearing the code word of Dha (voice).¹⁴⁷

Immediately after this, Lt. Narayan Dutt Badola of the state forces, accompanied by Tehsildar Pachhad, Durga Ram, visited Dhamla and persuaded the ringleaders to visit Nahan and lay their grievances before the Maharaja of Sirmaur. It appears, though initially agreeable, the leaders, at the instance of their colleague, changed their mind, apprehending breach of safe conduct assured by the Government officers and fearing that at Nahan they might be unceremoniously locked up and prosecuted on false cases, as they claimed, had happened in the past also.¹⁴⁸

The leaders of the Pajhota Andolan therefore, demanded that the ruler should come to their areas and see for himself the miserable plight of his subjects, listen to their grievances and remove them on the spot.¹⁴⁹ Thus, it was the only opportunity which the Maharaja Rajendra Prakash ought to have seized and avoid unpleasant occurrences that took place later on. However, the officials of the state advised the Raja against undertaking a tour of the area as they felt that it would be hazardous, and disgraceful. The Raja, therefore, refused to undertake the tour of the areas, to the great disappointment and annoyance of the people.

Ram Swarup, D.S.P. was replaced by Jagat Singh, who, with a view to suppress the movement and apprehend the ringleaders, stopped up the activities of the police. Consequently, two police formations, one to village Kanog and the other to village Kotli, to effect the arrests of Ishru and Chet Ram respectively, were sent. On 25th Baisakh 2000 Samvat (May 1943), a
police party arrested Ishru and Ram Bhaj, two of the ringleaders; but another police party while trying to arrest Chet Ram, was attacked by the agitators, who had gathered in large numbers and were armed with weapons. Immediately Jagat Singh, D.S.P. along with his additional police force arrived at Kotli. The agitators overpowered the police and marched to Taproli, where under duress Jagat Singh, D.S.P. was forced to give a chit asking the inspector of police to release Ishru and Ram Bhaj. The D.S.P. and the police force were released by the rebels on 27 Baisakh 2000 Samvat (8 May 1943) in three batches after restoring them their weapons. This incident showed that the movement was getting serious and developing into an armed rebellion.

As the law and order situation had gone beyond the control of the civil administration, the Sirmaur Darbar sent its armed forces under the charge of Major H.S. Bam to Pajhota to complete the task assigned to police of suppressing the agitation and apprehending the culprits. Major H.S. Bam, along with the state forces reached Rajgarh on 29th Baisakh, 1943, where immediately after his arrival, he issued a proclamation directing all the ringleaders, to surrender within 24 hours falling which martial law will be imposed on 13 May 1943. The troops were also ordered to disarm as many villagers as possible and to demolish the chief lairs and meeting places of the ringleaders. On the 8th Jeth (20 May) 1943, Major H.S. Bam ordered the destruction of the house of Vaid Surat Singh at Katogra, on the pretext that this house had been used for holding secret meetings of the Kisan Sabha and storing weapons.
Ringleaders of Payhota Andolan in fetters.
The order given by Major H.S. Bam to demolish Vaid Surat Singh's house was, perhaps, the most unfortunate one, because it infuriated the agitators as much that they too looted the houses of Chet Ram of Ser Manon and Laxmi Singh of Kotla on 8th and 10th Jaith, 1943 (20 and 22 May, 1943) respectively in sheer retaliation, as these people were suspected of disloyalty towards the movement. On 11 June 1943, a detachment of state forces was sent to village Koti under the charge of Nand Ram to destroy the house of Kali Ram. The agitators, who had also assembled in large number in village Koti to prevent destruction of the house of Kali Ram were armed with swords, lathis, dangras and guns. When Nand Ram found the lives of his men endangered by the encircling agitators, he ordered firing and the troops opened fire in which one Kamna Ram of village Kumharla was killed and several others injured. After the firing the agitators dispersed and some of them sought refuge in Keonthal, Jubbal and other neighbouring states.

Thereafter, state forces moved to Dhamla, where H.S. Bam, Commanding Officer, confiscated the immovable property of the absconding leaders. One by one all the ringleaders were arrested and imprisoned in Central jail at Nahan.

About sixty nine persons were tried by Justice Gauri Prasad, one man special tribunal for alleged rebellion. Out of sixty nine accused, three were sentenced to undergo two years imprisonment, forty eight were awarded life imprisonment and remaining eighteen were let off for want of evidence against them. Later on, Justice Mukand Lal Puri, who constituted one man Nyay Sabha of the State reduced the life imprisonment to a term of ten,
seven and five years rigorous imprisonment, depending upon the intensity of the alleged crime committed by the accused.\textsuperscript{154}

After a period of two to three years all the accused except Vaid Surat Singh, Basti Ram Pahari and Chet Singh were set free. The three leaders of the movement mentioned above were freed on 17 March, 1948, a week prior to the arrival of E.P. Kriplani, Finance Secretary Central Government of India, in the month of March, 1948, at Nahan to discuss the details of merger of the Sirmaur State in the Indian Union.\textsuperscript{155}

Maharaja Rajendra Prakash visited the Pajhota pargana in the end of November 1943 i.e. four months after the Pajhota Andolan. He told R.G.E.W. Alban, Political Agent, Punjab Hill States, that “the people of Pajhota pargana had no grievances and that the whole movement was a put up show on the part of the workers of Kisan Sabha and Praja Mandal to defame the ruler and his administration”. However, this was not entirely true. The people of Pajhota valley were in fact agitating against reet, beth-begar, excessive taxes like Punchi, Mamla Gharat, Dholu Ghas, high land revenue rates and heavy fines for petty offences. They were also against recruitment and imposition of many kinds of restrictions. Further, there was lack of sympathetic hearing by the state authorities over a prolonged period of time. Neither the Maharaja nor anyone else from amongst the state officials or other key positions, visited the Pajhota pargana to find out as to what were the grievances of the subjects, though the trouble was brewing up there for about three years. Representations of the people went unheeded.

The above mentioned and several other reasons were responsible for Pajhota Andolan which was started under the aegis of Kisan Sabha and the
Praja Mandal. Further, resorting to heavy firing by the armed troops of the state, was unjustifiable. But if the state was not having its own forces, the armed troops from the British, as it happened in the case of rebellion in Bilaspur State, would have been rushed to Pajhota paragana to crush the movement. Thus, Pajhota movement was an attempt by the oppressed subjects to seek economic uplift and social and administrative reforms in the erstwhile State of Sirmaur.

To revert to the Praja Mandal activities, the demand for self government in Sirmaur gathered momentum around 1946 when the leaders of the Himalayan Hill States Regional Council and Simla Riyasti Praja Mandal attended a big conference at Nahan on 31 August – 1 September 1946 and passed resolutions asking the Sirmaur chief to associate people in the state administration. Due to mounting pressure from the Praja Mandalists, Maharaja Rajendra Prakash finally announced the formation of a Rajya Parishad.156

The state, however, through a clever move, debarred several voters on the basis of one year's continuous stay in the state. The Praja Mandal leaders sent reports to All India States People's Conference for further guidance in the state agitation. It was decided by the Praja Mandal to boycott the constitutional reforms of the so called Rajya Sabha.157 The movement for a democratic set up and removal of the ruler continued till 13 March 1948, when finally the goal of merger of Sirmaur State in Himachal Pradesh was achieved after the merger document was signed by the then ruler Maharaja Rajendra Prakash.158 Though the merger document was signed on 13 March
but the merger of the state was duly and legally recognized from 15 April 1948.

**Balsan**

Balsan, a small state in Simla hills with an area of 51 square miles was situated about 30 miles east of Simla on the left bank of the Giri river. Balsan witnessed long trouble from January 1946 onwards which started as a result of tussle between the Rana Ran Bahadur Singh and the state manager and led the former to socially boycott the state manager and imposed fines upon a lambardar close to him. Workers on the basa served notice on the manager to get their demands accepted. Manager accused the Rana of instigating the workers and accused him of all round failure on accounts of forest, treasury, judicial and revenue management. The basa was in possession of the British and maintained by the State Manager. This piece of land was the main cause of feud between the British and the Rana. Ultimately Rana was disposed off from gaddi through an order of Political Agent on October 19, 1946 and asked to leave the State.

The subjects of Balsan later on offered a satyagraha for equitable distribution of civil supplies and 100 people offered arrest. Praja Mandal intervened in the Balsan affairs in May 1946 and the manager again blamed the Rana of instigating the people to embarrass the administration. Praja Mandal workers were arrested under Public Safety Ordinance on April 15, 1947. Balsan had poor jail facilities and there was no scientific jail, no security and jail workers.

The State Manager let loose repression on people and a peaceful demonstration of Praja Mandal organized for the release of defenues was
fired at and two persons died and several were injured. Thus, the situation became critical and the State was put under the direct control of Political Agent. He asked the state administration not to tolerate the outsider’s political interference and lent military support from the adjoining Jubbal and Sirmaur States to suppress the movement. Praja Mandal workers were not released and no improvement was made in the conditions of jails.

**Demand for Responsible Government**

In the forties there was a clear-cut shift in the demands of *Praja Mandal*. The emphasis was shifted from *begar* to the demand for the grant of responsible government and it gathered prominence with the growth of popular movements. Though the demand was raised earlier by Himalayan States People Conference in its meeting held on April 2nd, 1938 at Delhi. Some success in the direction of democratization was achieved in Mandi where an executive committee existed which had nomination to it on the basis of property held. It was only on the intervention of the Praja Mandal in the form of a *satyagraha* that people’s participation was conceded only at the later stage and a ministry was constituted. Sirmaur State was also obliged to constitute a *Rajya Parishad* after the Pajhota Andolan of 1942.

The demand for responsible government became more loud in every hill states by the end of 1947. Bushahr was one of them. In Bushahr, the Praja Mandal started *satyagraha* to force the administration to concede the demand. The demand for the responsible government did not include the overthrow of the rulers, but it was aimed at democratization of the state administration through elections but under the aegis of the rulers so as to
maintain happiest relations between the Rulers and the subjects for the
general welfare and prosperity.\textsuperscript{173}

This position was not a coincidence or specific strategy of the leaders
but it had trickled down through a resolution in the Ludhiana Conference of
1939, in which AISPC leadership asked the rulers to establish the responsible
government in the states to keep the spirits of time and natural aspirations of
their subjects along with a position of influence and dignity above contention
and strife.\textsuperscript{174}

Nehru also made it clear that the aim of the Congress was full
responsible government for the people of the states in a free integrated India
and the rulers were to continue as the constitutional heads and he visualized
changes in States to reach the goal of attainment of responsible governments
as definite but proceeding slowly.\textsuperscript{175} About the smaller states, he made it
clear that:

"...They are on their trial and this is the last chance they are
going to get. Unless they move rapidly and suffer a sea-change
into something better, their day is ended. They have chance
immediately to group themselves where possible into efficient
units of Indian Federation for which certain essential
qualifications will be necessary including that of democracy and
progressive government".\textsuperscript{176}

This view was reiterated by AISPC which demanded that the enquiry
should be conducted into the denial of civil liberties, excessive taxation and
grant of responsible governments in smaller states and link the latter to their
merger in the bigger Indian Provinces.\textsuperscript{177}
As a result of the demand for the democratization of administration, most of the States were forced to concede the responsible governments and elections were held in majority of the states. In Theog, Praja Mandal won majority seats as fair and free elections were held there and a democratically elected ministry came up. Praja Mandal won majority seats where free and fair elections were held. However, in many states like Sirmaur and Dhami administration resorted to the intimidation of the voters and elections turned out to be a farce exposing the designs of the state administrations.

The Formation of Himachal Pradesh

As elsewhere, the Suket State was also noted for its inefficient system of administration. The officials of the state were corrupt and tyrannical. The Darbar itself was infamous for receiving bribes by way of Nazar and Bhaints. The will of the Darbar was the fundamental law and the most hated begar or forced labour was also prevalent in the state. The oppressive policies of the Darbar led to widespread discontentment and uprisings. This discontentment and resentment continued to grow in the state till it finally culminated in the form of a satyagraha.

Like the Mandi State, the people of Suket, under the inspiration of the leaders of the Gadhr Party of Punjab, made notable contribution in the national struggle for freedom and actively participated in putting an end to the authoritarian and autocratic regime of Raja Laxman Sen (1920-48) in their state. Encouraged by the Punjab revolutionaries, the people of the state, as early as 1924, agitated against the excesses of the state authorities by
refusing to render begar. However, the agitation was suppressed with the help of the British troops from Dharamsala.

For almost two decades, there was no organized political activity in the Suket State. The Praja Mandal was established in the state in 1945 under a revolutionary leader Rattan Singh and its workers agitated for the restoration of their democratic rights. The Suket ruler, Raja Laxman Sen, with a view to satisfy the people accepted their demand of a responsible government by forming a 'Rajya Sabha'. However, the Suket Rajya Praja Mandal did not take part in its elections.

The growth and consolidation of Praja Mandal movements in the hill states led to the identification of their cultural, economic and geographical commonality to the extent that the later part of Praja Mandal movements got diverted to the demand for creation of a province in the Himalayan region. Their demand for the responsible government in these states was one such step in this direction. Praja Mandals leadership was conscious of the fact that the smallness of these states, economic inviability and backward administrative structures as compared to those existing in the British Indian Provinces were the major factors which did not favour the separate existence of these states.

Demand for a Separate State

The demand to form a separate state in the Himalayan region by merging different hill states came from different quarters. Chamba Praja Mandal passed a resolution on 26 March 1946 and asked AISPC to make its stand clear about the grouping of Indian States. It also demanded creation of a unit in the Himalayas from Chamba to Tehri or even extending to the
borders of Nepal in the East as the same was feasible in view of social, economic, cultural and political status of the people living in this geographically similar region. It suggested 'Himalaya' as the name of the proposed province. The proposal also included British India areas such as Kangra and Simla to make it an area of 24,197 square miles with an income of 2 crore rupees and total population of 24,56,178. Further, they proposed a legislature of two houses as Narinder Mandal and Praja Mandal on the basis of British parliament's House of Lords and House of Commons respectively.

In 1946 Satya Dev Bushahri, leader of HHSRC emphasized the richness of natural resources of these states and the urge for desirable rational regional developments apart from social, cultural and economic commonality of the hill people. He made a plea for the creation of 'Himalaya Prant' from Kashmir to Nepal and Kalka to Tibet covering 36 States and some districts of Indian Union with a population of 20 lakh, covering an area of 1800 square miles and estimated income of rupees five crores.

The Praja Mandalists made out the demand for separate hill state with an emphasis on regional economic development, language, culture and foresaw the Himalayan Province as an economically viable unit. The year 1947 saw a vertical split in HHSRC and this led both the factions to ask for a new province in Indian Union by merging the hill states.

In a resolution passed in its meeting held at Simla on October 29th, 1947, Himalayan Hill States Sub-Regional Conference (HHSSRC) asked for a separate province in Indian Union on the basis of common social, cultural
and geographical factors. The Resolution moved by Shiva Nand Ramaul reads:

“Our States are geographically contiguous with a common historical tradition and cultural homogeneity and linguistic unity and its administration as a composite unit under one of the princes elected by the concerned electorate for the time being as constitutional head, will be to raise the social and economic standards of administration”.\textsuperscript{189}

Further, HHSSRC proposed creation of a Union of the Himalayan Hill States on line of Deccan States Union\textsuperscript{190} with all powers in people’s assembly and rulers board to act merely as advisory body to lead and guide the people. The other group of Praja Mandalists led by Satya Dev Bushahri, Bhag Mal Sauhta etc. also organized a conference at Baragaon (Sangri State) on December 21-22, 1947 and they also asked for the creation of a full-fledged province of Himalayan States. The Conference asked Praja Mandal workers to concentrate and devote themselves to the cause of achieving the same and also suggested ‘Himalayan Prant’, as the name of the proposed province.\textsuperscript{191} Thus, all these demands emanating from Praja Mandalists and individually from some leaders made the common social, cultural, lingual and geographical factors as the basis of their case.

On the other hand, rulers of Simla Hill States met in New Delhi in July 1947 and a scheme to form a confederation of Simla Hill States was worked out and they claimed the approval of AISPC for the same. However, Y.S. Parmar reacted sharply to such a scheme and wanted to know from AISPC whether the proposal was approved by it or not. He had apprehensions that
At this place an assembly of representatives of the rulers and the praja mandalists met on 26-28 January 1948, under the chairmanship of Raja Durga Singh of Baghat.
the scheme would not be ratified by the people as they would not get time to ponder over the scheme and the rulers would put their yesmen on the administration. He also alleged that some rulers were joining hands with Kashmir and the whole plan was to gain time to resist the will of the people.\textsuperscript{192}

The rulers of Simla Hill States met again at New Delhi on 5-7 January, 1948 to chalk out their future strategies. In this meeting the rulers unanimously decided to constitute a Union of States for the greater good of the people of the Himalayan States. At the same time, Raja Durga Singh of Baghat (Solan) and the Raja of Mandi met Mahatma Gandhi, who advised them to call a joint meeting of the representatives of the Praja Mandalis and the rulers to decide the whole issue. As suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, an assembly of representatives of the rulers and the Praja Mandalists met at Solan from 26-28\textsuperscript{th} January 1948, under the chairmanship of Raja Durga Singh of Baghat. The assembly was confined to the Simla Hill States only. Some prominent Praja Mandal leaders who attended the meeting included Bhag Mal Sauhta, Satya Dev Bushahri, T.S. Negi, Devi Dass, Vijay Kumar, Bhaskar Nand, Chintmani and Hari Dutt. It decided to constitute a single state by merging all the Princely States.\textsuperscript{193} Satya Dev Bushahri proposed the name of the new state as ‘Himachal Pradesh’. Many others names were suggested at different quarters of time like Virat Desh, Kailash Desh,\textsuperscript{194} Himalaya Prant,\textsuperscript{195} Himalaya\textsuperscript{195} but the one viz. ‘Himachal Pradesh’ that came up at Solan Assembly was accepted later on. The decision to this effect was communicated to the Government of India on March 1, 1948.\textsuperscript{197}
The move was, however, opposed by a section of the Praja Mandalists led by Y.S. Parmar and Padam Dev, who well understood the hidden designs and intentions of the rulers behind such a move. They refused to recognize the Union of States until the power was transferred to the people and the individual identity of the states was erased out. The rulers refused to yield and consequently the Praja Mandal leaders contacted Sardar Patel at Delhi and apprised the latter about the real intentions of the hill chiefs. The Government of India, accordingly refused to recognize the proposed Union of States and thus frustrated the designs of the rulers of the hill states.

The Suket Satyagraha

The ‘Suket Satyagraha’ helps us in understanding the pattern of political awakening in the hill states of Himachal Pradesh leading to the end of the process of integration of the hill states with the Indian Union.

With the independence of the country in 1947 and the attempts by the then Raja Laxman Sen to delay the process of handing over of power to the people, it became necessary for the people’s representatives working under the aegis of the AISPC to energize their activities so as not to remain for long under the personal rule of the Raja. Suket was brewing with trouble and a clash was imminent between the Raja and the people. The overall political situation was highly volatile and in October 1947, AISPC appointed Satya Dev Bushahri and Budhi Singh Nautiyal to hold inquiry on the political situation in the state. Y.S. Parmar in a press release asked the Raja to concede responsible government and grant civil liberties. Later, he asked for the merger of Suket State in Indian Union without delay as the State was indulging in massive oppression of the subjects.
The Suket Praja Mandal lent its support to the Confederation Scheme of States launched at Solan and asked that the Union of States should vest sovereignty, all powers and authority to the people and abolish territorial boundaries between the constituent states and making provisions for administration of the Union as a single unitary state to be known as Himachal Pradesh. It asked the Suket State to join the Union at an early date to avoid otherwise its inevitable merger with East Punjab.\textsuperscript{200}

The stage was now set to take effective steps to force this issue of integration. A Provisional Government of the Himalayan Prant was set up by Himalayan Hill States Regional Council (HHSRC) with the approval of AISPC in February, 1948 with Pt. Shiva Nand Ramaul (President of Sirmaur Praja Mandal) as its President, and with its headquarters at Simla. The other members of the Provisional Government were Sada Ram Chandel of Bilaspur, Pt. Padam Dev of Bushahr and Mukand Lal of Suket.\textsuperscript{201}

The leaders of the Provisional Government met at Sunni (Bhajji State) on February 8, 1948 and resolved to launch a movement to secure the merger of the hill states with the Indian Union. The State of Suket was selected as the first target by the leaders because the circumstances were very favourable there for such a movement. On February 16, 1948, a forty-eight hours notice was served to Raja Laxman Sen, to hand over the State administration in the hands of the people for its merger with the Indian Union.\textsuperscript{202}

When no response was received to this ultimatum, a non-violent movement was started on February 18, 1948. Thousands of unarmed satyagrahis marched from Sunni to Suket to force the Raja to merge Suket
with the Indian Union. The satyagrahis met hardly any resistance from the state forces or police as it was completely demoralized due to the overwhelming response which the satyagrahis received from the subjects of the state as well as others. The limited resources at their disposal also prevented the state police from dealing strongly with a mass movement of such a magnitude. Consequently, Pangna 9 miles from Karsog fell to the satyagrahis and Karsog, the tehsil headquarters was also taken over without much resistance.203

The satyagrahis were instructed by their leaders to stop at Jaidevi, six miles away from the State capital Sundernagar. But it was impossible to obey the instructions as state forces were ready for actions.204 In a meeting on February 25, 1948, some 10,000 satyagrahis resolved for the merger of Suket with Indian Union and urged the Government of India to accept the region as a separate province of India.205 In another telegram to Kriplani, Additional Secretary, Ministry of States, on February 28, 1948 stated that the satyagrahis were only 3 miles from Sundernagar, the State capital and were waiting for the arrival of State administration.206

However, the Princes held a meeting with the Ministry of States on March 2, 1948 and agreed to merge these states with the Indian Union.207 This development should have diluted the decision of Suket satyagraha on merger issue but that did not happen. With the intensification of the satyagraha, the local officials saw their safety in pledging their loyalty to the people's government. The dangerous elements were either suppressed and their leaders, mostly police and high executives, were imprisoned by the people. In this way Suket fell. The state finding itself unable to resist the
onslaught, appealed for help to the Government of India, but the latter advised the State to sign the agreement of merger. The satyagraha was called off on March 8, 1948, when the Union of India and the Rulers signed a agreement as per their decision for merger of States taken in a meeting held in New Delhi on 2 March 1948.\textsuperscript{208}

Needless to point out that the Suket satyagraha created greater awakening among the people of other hill states whose rulers also took the cue from this movement and hastened to sign the merger agreement.

**Formation of Chief Commissioner’s Province Known as Himachal Pradesh**

By April 15, 1948, 21 hill States and 9 feudatories were taken over by the Government of India,\textsuperscript{209} which ultimately led to the formation of a centrally administered unit or Chief Commissioner’s Province known as ‘Himachal Pradesh’. Its first Chief Commissioner was N.C. Mehta.\textsuperscript{210} Following were the States and Feudatories which constituted Himachal Pradesh:

1. Baghal
2. Baghat
3. Balsan
4. Beja
5. Bhajji
6. Bushahr
7. Chamba
8. Darkoti
9. Dhami
10. Jubbal
11. Keonthal
12. Kumarsain
13. Kunihar
14. Kuthar
15. Mahlog
16. Mandi
17. Mangal
18. Sangri
19. Sirmaur
20. Suket
21. Tharoch

**Feudatories**

1. Delath
2. Dhadi
3. Ghoond
4. Khaneti
5. Koti
6. Madhan
7. Ratesh
8. Rawingarh
9. Theog
Kangra

Kangra was bounded on the north-east by the Dhauladhar range, on the south-east by the hill states of Kullu, Mandi and Bilaspur, on the south-west by district of Hoshiarpur and on the north-west by the Gurdaspur district and by the native state of Chamba. It was 2,544 square miles, and the population (1921) 644,038.\(^{211}\)

The hill areas of Kangra, Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti met with a different fate after their capture by the British as a result of Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46. Their strategic importance impelled the Britishers not to restore these areas to their erstwhile ruler. Unlike the policy adopted elsewhere in the hills, it was decided to pension off the Rajas and to take these areas under the direct British administrative control. As such all these hill areas were grouped together and constituted into one district of Kangra. A few attempts by some of the subjects of these states\(^ {212}\) ended in smoke. The stranglehold of British administration gradually tightened and by an appeal to the martial traditions of hill people they were able to turn these hills into fertile recruitment area for their famous Dogra Regiments. The British rulers were, therefore, very sensitive to any growth of feelings of nationalism in these areas and were extra-vigilant to curb and suppress any beginnings of national movement.

However, all these measures failed to prevent the spread of nationalist feelings, especially after Mahatma Gandhi's efforts began to transform the Indian National Congress into a mass organization. The people of Kangra hills were the first to revolt for the protection of their fundamental rights and getting their justified demands accepted by the State authorities. In 1920-21, the Kangra people led by Thakur Pancham Chand, Lala Bashi Ram and
others, boycotted the foreign goods. Their most popular leader was, however, Baba Kanshi Ram of Dada Siba, known as 'Pahari Gandhi', who spread the message of nationalism among the people of the area. Several conferences were held and processions were taken out under the leadership of Baba Kanshi Ram.\textsuperscript{213}

In 1927 a conference was held at Tal in Sujanpur Tira which was addressed by Baba Kanshi Ram. In this conference, oaths were taken by a large number of workers for the freedom of the country. The people were lathi-charged and beat mercilessly by the British forces. Political meetings were banned and several leaders, including Baba Kanshi Ram were sentenced to long-term imprisonments. They were released only in 1931 under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.\textsuperscript{214}

As a result of severe repression, the freedom movement in Kangra had slackened but it picked up again when the Congress decided to contest elections to the Legislative Assemblies being constituted on the basis of the Act of 1935. During the election campaigns the message of the national leadership was carried to all parts of the district. During Second World War the recruitment for the Indian Army was launched on a large scale in Kangra by the British. The workers of the freedom movement dissuaded the people from joining the army. The individual satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi was conducted in the district and large number of Congress workers who offered satyagraha, were arrested, tried and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.\textsuperscript{215}

The Quit India Movement\textsuperscript{216} of the Indian National Congress also received enthusiastic response from the people of this district. The British
government undertook extensive measures to crush the movement and arrested anyone, who was suspected of having any direct or indirect link with the Congress. At this time a freedom fighter from Lahore, Pt. Amar Nath Sharma, came to Palampur. He had been evading arrest by the police for participation in the freedom movement. On reaching the district he realized that climate for any political activity was not favourable. So, a new turn to the movement was given by him by opening a large number of educational institutions and Aushadhalayas. By giving a social and educational content to the freedom struggle, he sustained the spirit and served the hill people of this area. In these activities, he was greatly helped by another political worker, Kanahiya Lal Butail, who had gained fame as the large hearted host of national leaders like Jawahar Lal, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Jagjiwan Ram and many leaders of Punjab. It is thus clear that the hill areas which became part of Himachal Pradesh in 1966 made a substantial contribution to the freedom struggle of India.

A Review of the Praja Mandal Movements and the Attitude of Rulers

The growth of democratic and political consciousness and coming together of the people of Hill States was countered by the Rulers with iron hand. The States like Dhami, Sirmaur and Balsan witnessed unprovoked police firing leading to the deaths of many a people. Frequent arrests, torture of political detenu and implicating of activists in false cases were common features. The democratic processes suffered by the use of draconian laws as Registration of Societies Act, Defence of Sirmaur Act and Public Ordinance Act.
In Mandi, Sirmaur, Suket and Bilaspur people were languishing in jails and the Pajhota prisoners of 1942 were not released even in 1947. The Tribune commented on the state of affairs in these States:

"The resistance to the movement is systematic... The Praja Mandal are not permitted to thrive. The protagonists and upholders of democracy are either thrown into prisons or thrown out of the State".

Himalayan States People Conference (HSPC) condemned the unpopular and tyrannical oppression of peoples activities in Hill States and asked the subjects of these States to rise against the repression let loose by States administrations. Praja Mandal leaders at a meeting held on October 4, 1947, asked for stopping the administrative high handedness and large scale arrests and lifting of Public Safety Ordinances. The suppression of civic liberties find special mention in many a political conferences. Bhag Mal Sauhta wrote to President AISPC, on December 12, 1947, about the suppression of democratic movement, especially, in Bilaspur and Suket. Sirmaur, Madhan, Balsan, Mandi and Bilaspur all witnessed wide spread repression. Satya Dev Bushahri and Budhi Sagar Nautiyal after a tour of Mandi, Suket and Bilaspur in December 24, 1947 reported of massive repression and termed the administration of these States as black spots on Himalayas. On November 13, 1947 Balak Ram, General Secretary of Scheduled Castes Association, asked for drawing a charter of rights for the State’s subjects.

The strength of the Praja Mandal made the Rulers to concede certain demands of the people. Raja Kunihar conceded many demands of people
even without resistance in 1939. However, it was not the changing attitudes of the States to the people but British wanted to keep these States alive and adopted measures to counter popular movements in the name of checking internal commotions. Lord Linlithgow canvassed for amalgamation of smaller States to provide better civil and judicial administration. It was during 1937-42 that the exercise of bringing these States together under joint administration was intensified by the British and these States accepted the principle of co-operative grouping.

A General Council of the Rulers of Simla Hill States was formed with Raja of Baghat as Chairman of its Executive Committee. The Rulers body accepted the advice of Political Authorities for setting-up of joint administrative machinery. Through a resolution the Executive Committee accepted the proposal to establish reserve police and its training unit. The concept of cooperative grouping was highly encouraged in case of Simla Hill States to monitor and audit forest and revenue jointly.

It was a clear move to further the interests of these States by pooling together resources and cutting down the administrative costs. However, in case of bigger States as Mandi, Suket, Sirmaur, Bilaspur and Chamba the enthusiasm for joint ventures was lacking. The Praja Mandals rejected the grouping scheme at the very outset as clubbing together of State forces to suppress people’s movements and snatch the right to improve the lots of people through unified organization.

Simla Hill States Administrative Union

In pursuance of their compulsion to carry reform in conformity with the British Policy of cooperative grouping, twenty one Simla Hill States formed
Simla Hill States Administrative Union and agreed on their free will to adopt the Union. It was the brain child of Raja of Baghat and Raja of Jubbal. The Union did not function effectively and remained more or less a paper organization.

The Union with respect to the component States had object to (i) administer the subjects of the component States, (ii) maintain and enhance the unity, strength and security of unifying States, (iii) ensure the cultural, dynastic and territorial integrity, (iv) maintain peace and order within and without, (v) protect the rights and liberties of the people and to promote common interests of the States.\textsuperscript{235}

The subjects of the Union were (a) defence (b) communication (c) external affairs (d) public justice (e) economic and industrial development (f) education (g) public health (h) veterinary and cattle breeding and (i) forest. In defence they had to maintain permanent police reserve force, in communication construction of means of communication, levying taxes and in external affairs all relationship between a member State and a non-member State and Government of India were to be executed, controlled and directed by the Union and establishment of economic and industrial units, educational institutions, medical and public health measures were of mutual interests of the concerned Durbars.\textsuperscript{236}

The Union was to get annual income of 15% from the member States and accomplish whole spectrum of welfare and developmental activities to raise fixed standards of modern requirements. It was to have a component legislature with chairman, senate and a house of representatives also called Union Assembly. The Union Assembly was to be controlled by the
nominated members by each Durbar from the persons elected by the people in each State in accordance with the provisions framed by the Durbar.  

Despite the harsh land relations and blatant exploitation by the Princes, the subjects of these States exhibited a low level of democratic consciousness. The popular movements got channelized into organized form and grew in mid-thirties tremendously as the hard social, political and economic realities provided fertile ground for spreading the roots of Praja Mandals in all these States. Kindling of democratic consciousness was essentially anti-feudal and the spectrum of issues raised by the Praja Mandals focused on issues related to land revenue in the early period to the demand for democratization of State administration. Strengthening of these movements forced the rulers and the British to initiate reforms in these States and they had also to pool their resources and joined hands to face challenges posed by the Praja Mandals. However, what is of significance is the coming together of the people in organized form, thus, forcing the Princes to come together and it facilitated the integration of these States at both the levels.
Notes and References

1. The Simla Times, 8 September 1921.


3. The Simla Times, 19 May 1921.


5. The Tribune, 17 May 1921; The Simla Times, 19 May 1921.


7. The Pioneer, 16 May 1921; 18 May 1921.


9. Gandhi made a political settlement on the question of ‘Swaraj’ a precondition for the meeting. Reading, on the other hand, raised the issue of breach of trust and drew Gandhi’s attention to the violence being preached at the ‘Khilafat Conference by the Ali brothers, which had become a rallying point for Muslims all over India. Gandhi sought to obtain large-scale support from the Muslim community by supporting the Khilafat cause. Gandhi accepted Reading’s position, and the main outcome of Reading’s twelve-hour dialogue with Gandhi, in six sessions, was agreement on an apology from the Ali brothers. See Ibid., p. 91.

10. The decision gave Simla one of the last public building of the British era; the Legislative Assembly was built in 1925.


12. The Simla Times, 10 April 1919.

13. For details of begar see Chapter 5, Part-I.

14. Ibid.

15. The Tribune, 8 July 1921.

16. Member of Legislative Assembly.


22. *Simla District Congress Activities, 1929-38*.


24. These shops belong to Bhola Ram and Sons, Framjee, and J. Morton and Co. Altogether, 106 volunteers were sent up for trial for picketing, 100 of whom were convicted. Most were convicted for three months, but leaders such as N.L. Varma, Chaudhary Rup Lal, Pt. Ganda Mal and Dina Nath Andhi were sentenced for one year imprisonment. See *Simla District Congress Activities, 1930, Simla Sadar Police Thana Records*; also see Dina Nath Andhi, "Swadhinta Sangram Mein Simla", in *Sangarsh Ke Veh Din*, Language and Culture Department Himachal Pradesh, (Simla, 1989), pp. 8-11.


31. *Ibid*.

32. Rai Bahadur Mohan Lal belongs to wealthy Sood family of Simla, also held the post of Municipal Commissioner of Simla. He was the moving spirit of the *Hindu Pracharni Sabha* in Simla; died in 1932.

33. Simla Municipal records do not indicate any other Indians being accorded the privilege. The concession to Gandhi was therefore considered by local leaders to be an achievement.
40. This association later helped in the growth of the Sirmaur Praja Mandal. See Chander Prakash, "*Himachal Ki Bhootpurva Riyaston Mein Rajnaitik Jagran*", *Him Prastha*, (Simla, December 1965), p. 19; also see Sumer Chand, "Sirmaur Mein Praja Mandal", in *Sangarsh Ke Veh Din*, pp. 42-43.
42. The delegation comprised of Pt. Padam Dev and Bhag Mal Sauhta from Simla Hill States, Swami Purnanand (Mandi), Thakur Hitendra Singh (Sirmaur), Sada Ram Chandel (Bilaspur), Vidya Sagar, Vidya Dhar, Gulam Rasool and Prithi Singh from Chamba.
44. *AISPC Constitution (Revised) Passed at Udaipur Conference January 1946*, (Allahabad, n.d.), p. 2; also see *AISPC*, File No. 63, Resolution 9, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 11.
45. Swami Purnanand of Mandi (President), Pt. Padam Dev of Bushahr (General Secretary), Shyam Chand Negi of Tehri Garhwal (Vice-President) and Pt. Shiva Nand Ramaul of Sirmaur (Joint Secretary). See *Himalayan Hill States Regional Council*, hereafter (*HHSRC*) file, (Simla, Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee, 1947).


54. It was headed by P.L. Chandu Lal, P.C.S., who was considered well qualified in land settlement work and was expected to set right the then disorganized state of administration in Bilaspur. Mian Man Singh, previous President of the Council, who was a local man, was appointed Home Member. Rai Sahib Lachhu Mal, a retired Tehsildar of the Punjab, who possessed good knowledge of revenue and judicial work, was appointed as Revenue and Judicial Member. Lala Mathra Das and Daya Ram, two previous members of the State Council were retired. See L.H. Griffin, *op.cit.*, pp. 523-24.

55. A tribute or a gift had to be presented to the Raja at the time any subject paid visit to him.

56. Personal servants in attendance to the Raja.


58. C.L. Datta, *op.cit.*, pp. 201-02; also see Anand Chand, *op.cit.*, p. 29.


61. Agent to Governor-General Punjab States to Political Secretary, Govt. of India (Foreign and Political Department), D.O. No. 1853-C/Bi-9-30. 6 October 1930. cited in C.L. Datta, *op.cit.*, pp. 202-03; also see Narotam Dutt Shastri, *op.cit.*, p. 59.


64. Agent to the Governor-General, Punjab States to Political Secretary, Govt. of India, 3 September 1930, No. 22-S. cited in C.L. Datta, *Ibid.*
65. Chief Secretary, Punjab Government to Political Secretary, Govt. of India, 13 November 1930, No.33445, Ibid., p. 205.


67. Agent to the Governor-General, Punjab States to the Secretary, Political Department, Govt. of India, 12 November 1930, Telegram No.2061-C. cited in C.L. Datta, op.cit., p. 205.

68. Agent to the Governor-General Punjab States to Political Secretary, Govt. of India, 17 November 1930, No.23-S cited in Ibid.  

69. Ibid., p. 206.

70. Narotam Dutt Shastri, op.cit., pp. 61-64.


72. They were Swami Purnanand, Pt. Padam Dev, Sada Ram Chandel, N.D. Shastri, Daulat Ram, Shyamanand, Thakur Dutt Shastri, Devi Ram, Gopi Ram, Krishan Chand and Satya Dev Bushahri etc.


75. See Appendix No. III; also see AISPC News Bulletin, 31 Ferozshah Road, New Delhi, August 1947.

76. The Tribune, 17 December 1947.


78. For details see Suket Satyagraha of this chapter.


81. On account of the construction of Bhakra Dam Project over Sutlej, Bilaspur State was made into a separate Chief Commissioner's province. Under the Act of 1935, the Government of India had no power to control multipurpose Hydel schemes. The centre obtained this power only under the new constitution. If, therefore, the
Government of India were to intervene and it was necessary that they should in this case – the only alternative was to take over Bilaspur as a Chief Commissioner’s province. By so doing, the Government of India would inherit the jurisdiction and powers of the Raja of Bilaspur and would have the final say. See *Ibid.*, pp. 285-86.


83. Broadly the word *Koli* means the scheduled caste in the Simla hills.


85. Extract from the petition of *Bethus* (Kolis) to Political Agent, 10 May, 1939. *Political Department Punjab Hill States Agency*, No. V-II/81/36 of 1934-40, National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi, n.p.

86. A representation has also been sent to *Durbar*. The demands mainly relate to the grant of popular government in the state, to the removal of certain local restrictions on the playing of bands and building houses, to the abolition of *begar*, reorganization of state services and to the provision in the states of educational and social facilities. See *Political Department*, No. 22(6)-P/40 (Secret) of 1940, Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Punjab Hill States, 15 March, 1940, NAI, New Delhi, n.p.

87. The people of hill states were asked by Praja Mandalists neither to give revenue to state nor to contribute money nor recruits for prosecution of war by the British government during 1939-42.

88. The parallel organizations cropped up due to personal leadership rivalry.

89. Satya Dev Bushahri, "*Purva Pahari Riyaston Mein Rajnitik Andolan*", in *Sangharsh Ke Veh Din*, p. 4.

90. *Hindi Hindustan*, New Delhi, 17 November 1946. It carries a news report on the strike by employees.


96. Ranbir Sharma, *op.cit.*, p. 36.


102. *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 17 March 1939.


108. Copy of Resolution passed by the *Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal* on 13 July 1939; see *AISPC* files 1937-40.
109. Political Developments in Dhami State, Home Political 1 (54)-P-Secret, 1939; see also Agitation in Indian States, Riots in Dhami, Home Political 6(54)-P-Secret, 1939, (National Archive of India, New Delhi), pp. 2-4.

110. In the firing, Durga Dass of Village Mandeya and Uma Dutt of Village Tangosh of Dhami State died on the spot and a number of others were injured, and after the firing the crowd dispersed. Bhag Mal Sauhta, Mansa Ram and Dharam Dass were arrested and put in the jail. Home Political 6(54)-P-Secret, 1939, op.cit., pp. 2-8; also see AISPC file No. 181(ii), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 407; also see C.R.B. Lalit (ed.), Himachal Pradesh Mein Swatantrata Sangram Ka Sankhasipt Itihas, (Shimla, 1992), p. 126.


113. Letter of Duni Chand to Burnett, Ibid., p. 405.


115. Ibid.

116. National Herald, Lucknow, 6 March 1940.


119. Ibid. Bhag Mal Sauhta who led the people of Dhami belongs to the Jubbal State.

120. The Tribune, 1 August 1939, also see S. Gopal, op.cit., pp. 499-500.


122. Ibid., p. 11.

123. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 18 July 1939.

124. Political Department, file No. 85-Co/39, 1939, op.cit., p. 11.
125. Ibid, file No. 22(6)-P/48(Secret), 1940, Agitation in the Dhami State, NAI, New Delhi; also see Sita Ram, op.cit., p. 3.


129. Ibid.


132. Political Department, file No. 212-P/46, (National Archive of India, New Delhi), p. 3.


138. Sher Jang belongs to the Sirmaur State and his father, Partap Singh had retired from the state service. He was accused in the Ahmadgarh Train Dacoity case which took place on October 15, 1929, and in which he provided four firearms for the dacoits. He was arrested and sentenced to ten years rigorous imprisonment by the Punjab Government. However, in May 1938, he was released prematurely on medical grounds and soon after his release he proceeded to Nahan to activate the Praja Mandal movement in the state. See Foreign and Political Department, file No. 248 (Secret), 1929; file No. Misc. 102 (Secret), 1929. National Archive, New Delhi.


142. Ibid.

143. *Punchi* (Cattle tax), *Mamla Gharat* (water mill tax), *Shokta* (fuel wood), *Dholu Ghas* (dry grass tax) and *reet* tax.


146. Chunchu Ram, Gulab Singh, Attar Singh, Mehar Singh, Madan Singh, Padma Ram, Kulgoo Ram, Kali Ram and Vaid Surat Singh were known as ringleaders.


148. Ibid., also see Surat Singh Vaid, *op.cit.*, n.p.

149. *Pajhota Andolan Case State V/s Chunchu etc.*, file No. A/1, U/S 194/201, IPC; also see Het Ram Pahariya, “Sirmaur Ka Ek Itihasik Andolan”, in *Sangharsh Ke Veh Din*, p. 34.

150. *Pajhota Andolan Case State V/s Chunchu etc.*, file No. A/1, U/S 194/209, IPC.

151. Ibid. also see Surat Singh Vaid, *op.cit.*, n.p.

153. See Appendix No. IV.

154. Ibid.


156. HHSRC File, (Simla, Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee hereafter (HPCC), 1947), n.p.; also see Sirmur Praja Mandal's letter dated 8.8.1946 to Padam Dev about the venue of political conference, see Appendix No. V; also see Satya Puri, "Sirmaur Mein Jang-i-Azadi", in Samritian, p. 111.

157. HHSRC File, (Simla, HPCC, 1947), n.p.; also see letter dated 15.1.1947 Appendix No. VI.


160. Basa or Crown land is very fertile usually owned by the state or royal family members.

161. Political Department, file No.C2/7/(14)/46, NAI, New Delhi, pp. 201-02 and 210.

162. Ibid.

163. Ibid.

164. Ibid., pp. 73 and 78.

165. Ibid., p. 93.

166. Ibid., p. 219.

167. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 19 February 1947.

168. AISPC file No. 181 (ii), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, pp. 381-83.

169. Ministry of States, file No. 212-P/48, NAI, New Delhi, p. 3.

170. HHSRC file (Simla, HPCC, 1947), n.p.

171. The Tribune, Simla, 12 and 15 December 1947.

172. News Chronicle, New Delhi, 22 December 1946.
173. AISPC file No. 63, op.cit., p. 113.
176. Ibid., p. 427.
177. AISPC file No. 236, op.cit., p. 15.
179. Ibid., 28 December 1947.
182. The Suket State, with an area of 420 square miles, was situated on the north side of the Sutlej river. It was bounded on the north by the state of Mandi and on the east by Kullu sub-division of Kangra district, on the south-west by the state of Bilaspur and on the south by Bhajji State. See Gazetteer of the Suket State 1927, (New Delhi, reprint, 1997), p. 1.
184. In a letter dated 15.5.1947, Rattan Singh, President Suket Praja Mandal informs the General Secretary of the Himalayan Hill States Regional Council about the unsympathetic attitude of the state ruler, who, it is further informed, is trying to form his own cabinet consisting of bad elements with view to crushing the Praja Mandal agitation. See Appendix No VII.
185. AISPC file No. 35, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, pp. 119-20.
186. Narinder means Raja or Lord and Praja means subjects or common people. See Ibid.
188. The elections were held to HHSRC Executive Committee on 10 June 1947, by restricting the number of delegates from Tehri Garhwal and Simla Group of States to 4 and 2 respectively. The number of delegates from these states were restricted in accordance with the directions issued by B. Pattabhi, President of AISPC. However, in the meeting the Simla Group of States did not agree to reduce the number
of their delegates. Consequently, this group led by Y.S. Parmar boycotted the meeting. The election proceeded and the delegates elected an Executive Committee with Purna Nand as its President. Y.S. Parmar and his friends formed Himalayan Hill States Sub-Regional Conference and Y.S. Parmar was elected its President. For details see AISPC file No. 263, op.cit., pp. 57-61, 247, 263-267.

189. AISPC file No. 63, op.cit., p. 133.

190. The Deccan States Union was a proposed Union of States contained in note from R.R. Diwakar from Hubli dated 16 October 1946, appended in a letter to B. Pattabhi. It proposed that power should emanate from people and advised constitution of a Maharaja-in-Council and a legislative body. Legislature was proposed as supreme authority, thus, obliterating the political individuality of Princes and the geographic boundaries of the States. It was proposed for about ten states and was in total contrast to the confederation scheme of the Eastern States Agency. For details see AISPC file No. 267, op.cit., p. 13.

191. AISPC file No. 163, op.cit., Resolution No. 5, p. 81.


193. Ministry of States File No. 63-P/48, NAI, New Delhi, p. 12. The States represented at Solan were Baghal, Baghat, Balsan, Beja, Bhajji, Bushahr, Darkoti, Delath, Dhadi, Dhami, Ghoond, Jubbal, Keonthal, Koti, Kumarsain, Kunihar, Kuthar, Mahlan, Mahlog, Ritesh, Rawingarh, Sangri, Tharoch and Theog.

194. It was suggested by Sirmaur Praja Mandal, see AISPC File No. 161, op.cit.

195. It was suggested by Y.S. Parmar group.

196. It was suggested by Suket Praja Mandal.

197. Y.S. Parmar, Himachal Pradesh: Case for Statehood, (Simla, 1968), p. 2; also see V.P. Menon, op.cit., pp. 201-02.

198. AISPC file No. 63, op.cit., pp. 201-03; also see Y.S. Parmar, op.cit., p. 2.

199. AISPC file No. 163, op.cit., p. 83 and 119.

200. Ibid., p. 51.


212. *Wazir* Ram Singh Pathania of Nurpur deserves a special mention.


220. Ibid.


223. The Tribune, Lahore, December 3, 1946.

224. AISPC file No. 181 (ii), op.cit., contains resolution No. 3 of the Conference held in New Delhi in 1942, p. 383.

225. AISPC file No. 163, op.cit., pp. 72-79.

226. AISPC file No. 63, op.cit., p. 27.

227. Ibid., p. 57.

228. Ibid., pp. 15-19.

229. Ibid., p. 53.


231. Ibid.

232. Ibid.

233. Foreign and Political Department File Nos. 167 and 231, Political Secrets 1942, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

234. AISPC file No. 181 (ii), op.cit., p. 41.


236. Ibid., Schedule B, p. 22.

237. Ibid., p. 13.