CHAPTER-4

AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

ANTI-COLONISATION BILL AGITATION, 1907

Despite passing the Punjab Land Alienation Bill in 1901 to protect the peasantry from the increasing burden of indebtedness by the money-landing classes their erupted the first agrarian unrest in Punjab, popularly called the 'Punjab Disturbances' during 1906-07. This peasant 'unrest' was mainly confined to the districts of the canal colonies including Rawalpindi and Layalpur but was soon spread to Lahore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Batala, Firozepur, Ambala, Hoshiarpur, Sialkot, etc.\(^{383}\)

The cause of this agitation was the raising of the irrigation rates in the Bari Doab Colony and also that by the end of 1906, the government had decided to curtail the rights of the cultivators with the avowed intention of reducing them to the position of tenants through the colonization bill.\(^{384}\) Other factors that accelerated discontent was ruin of cotton crop by ball warn and damage to wheat crop by a blight caused by untimely rains. In 1907 plague had broken out. The workers, low paid employees and other poor sections were hit by steep rise in food prices. In fact the peasant movement against colonization bill and enhanced levis farmed part of anti-imperialist peasant upsurge.\(^{385}\)


\(^{384}\) Navtej Singh, *Challenge to Imperial Hegemony, op.cit.*, p. 10.

\(^{385}\) Master Hari Singh, *op.cit.*, p.16.
The result was the rise of popular agrarian agitation led by the educated middle classes. In early 1907, public meetings were held in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Layalpur to demonstrate public resentment to the official bill introduced to give to the changes desired by the government. Popularly called as 'Bharat Mata Society' took active part in the agitation. Its most important members were Ajit Singh, Sufi Amba Parsad and Lal Chand Falak. They organized meetings at different places and in one of the meeting at Layallpur, Lala Lajpat Rai, vindicating the claim of the peasant to legitimate ownership of the land, commented: Wherefore did the government bring these lands? The blood of our forefathers was shed on it; we conquered it and inhabited it. These lands are, therefore, either ours or God's..... Government officers are servant to serve us and not to rule us. Do not fear the jails nor death.

Ajit Singh, a fiery orator, who spoke in this meeting, gave a call for revolt. He told his countrymen that three hundred million Indians could easily defeat the hundred and fifty thousand Englishmen in India. The soul stirring song Pagree Sambhal Jatta, composed by Banke Dayal, invoked self-respect in the Punjabi peasant. In the face of the persecution and closer of the Punjabi and a threatened 25% tax increase, the movement spread rapidly. At Rawalpindi, Ajit Singh made another appeal for non-payment of the enhanced tax and called upon the peasantry to stop cultivation. The government made some arrests. On 2 May 1907, people observed a complete Hartal (strike) and gathered in the compounds of the district courts. Their numbers were swelled rapidly on account of the fact that there was another strike in the government arsenal, the railway work shop and private workshop. The crowd became violent and smashed court furniture. Even the houses of European

officers were not spared. The cumulative effect of British action was the spread of discontent. The members of 'Bharat Mata Society', being prolific writers and fiery orators they launched the idea of nationalism in the minds of the people.

Addressing a meeting in Layallpur, Ajit Singh said : 'We should not help the government whether it works Justly or unjustly, because it does not belong to our country. The English are robbers, we should expel them. The words I am speaking may be an offence; I may be imprisoned or hanged, but I do not care for the law, I wish to trample the law under my feet. The tyrants should be murdered. The motto of the Bharat Mata was; 'Those who are subject to other cannot think of the others'.

The peasant disaffection spread to army ranks owing to a close liasan between the two. The imminent celebration of the revolt of 1857 and the sympathies of the Sikh infantry with the disaffected, made the government apprehensive of a popular revolt. Consequently the government deported both Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai to Mandalay. In due course the movement abated, partly owing to the repressive measures taken by the government, of course; by the Governor General vetoing the Colonization Bill. The plans of the revolutionary were forestalled by an official raid upon the Tilak Press, Hoshiarpur, in which much of their secret literature was captured by the police. But Ajit Singh's speech expressing the concept of violent revolt were carried forward.

The agrarian movement which was carried away by Ajit Singh was also actively supported by some other revolutionaries including Sufi Amba Parsad, Zia-ul-Haq, Lal Chand Falak, Kishen Singh, Sawarn Singh and other prominent members who strove to spread the ideology of

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387 Navtej Singh, op. cit., pp.11-12.
388 Navtej Singh, op. cit., p.12.
programme of the society were: Mehta Anand Kishore, secretary of the Anuman-i-Muhibaan-i-Vatan, Duni Chand of Lahore, Ghasita Ram, Lala Ram Saran Das of Kapurthala, Lala Pindi Das, Dhanpat Rai, Kartar Singh, ex-Editor of the Edward Gazatte (Kasur), Jaswant Rai, proprietor of Punjabee, Dinna Nath of Kasur, Ram Singh, Jagan Nath, Mulk Raj, Paras Ram, Labh Singh, Gurdit Singh, Ram Chand of Peshawar, Zia-ulla of Kasur, Mahashe Narain, sub Editor of the Hindustan (Lahore), Amolak Ram, Gurdas Ram, Muhammad Shafi, and Mian Shahuddin and Sarla Devi.\textsuperscript{389}

The leadership of the agrarian movement not only organised the farmers of the canal colony areas of Lahore, Lyallpur, Multan etc. but also instigated the traders and small shop-keepers of the cities of Amritsar and Batala along with the workers and peons. They asked the official and non official workers to participate in the struggle against the British government. The propaganda of the leadership was so strong among the army units that some of the army men secretly attended their meetings in which lectures were being given to arouse patriotic and nationalistic sentiment. Special attention was given to the Sikhs in the regiments and also to the ex-army men.

The leadership also distributed seditious pamphlets in the villages and open rebellion was preached against the government. The task of generating the spirit of revolt among the Sikh regiments through the militant propaganda was assigned to Lala Madhu Sudan. To the extent that S. Ajit Singh contacted the Bengali revolutionaries, terrorist of the Jammu state and some foreign revolutionaries especially the revolutionaries of Russia.\textsuperscript{390} Along with the making of appeals from the

\textsuperscript{389} Pardaman Singh and Dhanki, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 3-4.
stages of public congregations, Ajit Singh by establishing Bharat Mata Society also adopted the strategy of distributing revolutionary literature published by the society to the public in the villages, government employees and among the army regiments.  

At the same time the colonies participating in the movement developed their own strategies with prior planning and co-ordination with urban organization; although mass demonstrations brought out as many as ten thousand protesters. The leaders did not stop at nearly submitting petitions but escalated towards non payment of land revenue and pressure through Indian army units. Propaganda such as cartoons, circulars and songs inculcating self respect and war like traditions of the Punjabis was designed to appeal generally to the illiterate agriculturists. The leadership of the movement besides distribution of pamphlets, organizing meetings, delivering of lectures and tours sort to infuse patriotism and self confidence among the people. Ajit Singh even used marriage party for propagating his ideas. He addressed scores of meetings and speaking in an idiom that was comprehensible to the ignorant. His personality attracted large crowd and he was able to communicate successfully with the common man.

The influence of the agitation spread to the districts of Lahore, Lyallpur, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Firozepur, Ambala, Jallandhar, Kasoor, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi and Gujrat etc. Apart from the strategical position the important literature produced under the patronage of Bharat Mata Society included: *1857 Da Ghadr, Unglali Pakre Panja Pakra,*

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Baghi Masih, Mehbooban-i-vatan, Bandar Bant and Desi Fauj. The movement also made use of the different newspapers by publishing their ideas. Prominent among such newspapers were the Punjabee, Jhang Syal, The Tribune, Hindustan, Weekly India, Amrita Bazar Patrika and Fulwari. It must be noted that this agrarian agitation of 1907 became very popular with the poem Pagri Sambhal O Jatta, Pagri Sambhal O, (take care of thy turban-self respect O! Jat) composed by the poet Banke Dyal of Gujranwala and was first recited by Prabh Dyal, editor Jhang Syal in a meeting at Gujranwala.  

Coming to the utilization of 'History' by the movement in its literature and their speeches, it has been noticed that the leadership of the movement more or less remained confined to the contemporary events of history under the British rule. Its use of pre-British historical events, particularly to the Sikh history is very limited. The first utilization of history available is pertaining to a speech of S. Ajit Singh delivered in a public meeting at Amritsar on 28 March, 1907. He emphasized that prior to the advent of the British in India the country was prosperous and the British interests resulted in its destruction. To prove his point, he referred to the plight of the indigo cultivators of Bihar. He also mentioned to the revolt of 1857 in which he criticized the Punjabis for helping the British.

396 G.S. Deol, Shaheed Ajit Singh, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, patiala, p. 108.
government who in turn did not give any special rights to them as Todar Mal and Birbal had received from Akbar for their services. Ajit Singh also critically evaluated policies of the Indian National Congress pursued during the last twenty years in comparison to the anti-British movement in Australia and Africa. He further made use of the contemporary events through the indication of the struggle by the women in England and their ultimate success.

The leadership in their lectures repeatedly emphasized the decline of prosperity of the country, the declaration of Queen Victoria in 1858, and the famine of 1877 terming it as the product of British rule. The leadership was also very critical and it repented the great help rendered by

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397 Ibid., p. 109.
398 Ibid., p. 110.
399 Master Hari Singh, op. cit., p. 111.
400 G.S. Deol, op. cit., p. 112.
the Punjabis to the British in their wars with other countries. In a lecture delivered at Rawalpindi on 21 April 1907 the leadership stressed that the only strategy to expel the British was the need of Hindu-Muslim unity. The economic destruction of the country and occurrences of famines were condemned in comparison to the attitude of a Chinese ruler during such happenings. Another prominent leader of the agitation Lala Lajpat Rai made a speech on 27 March 1907 at Lyallpur and addressed a large gathering there. He reminded the masses that once they were rulers of this land and for that their ancestors had to make great sacrifices.

Another lecture delivered by Lajpat Rai at Amabala, he stressed the need for Hindu Sikh and Muslim unity for the creation of patriotic force against the British giving examples from the history of Europeans nations. He even referred to the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905 by declaring that such a small nation could defeat a bigger power. While addressing a gathering in canal colony S. Ajit Singh exhorted the Indians

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401 Roger W. Scott, The Punjabee, March 27, 1907.
402 Ibid, p. 112.
403 Ibid, p. 115.
404 The Japanese have recently shown to what lofty heights patriotic fervour can rise. A mother's stabiling herself in order to free her son from the burden of her maintenance so that he might go to war and die for her beloved country. Even in European countries, with their long legend of national patriotism such examples of sublime devotion are rare. The Punjabee, April 6, 1907.
to respect the traditions of their *Rishi-Muni* in order to inculcate the spirit of pride against the prevailing slavery. In other words utilizing the rich heritage of the Indians.  

He also referred to the exploitative mechanism adopted by the imperial power in India. Emphasis was also given on actions of the ancestors along with the contributions of the Sikh Gurus for eradication of such situations.

In another lecture delivered at Lahore on 7 April 1907 the leadership referred to the role of Guru Gobind Singh and the *Panj Piara* in the abolition of the Mugal Empire. The leadership is not only keen to make use of the 'history' but it reflected their sense of discrimination and critical examination. It is mentioned that the epic hero of Ramayana Lord Ram Chandra suffered exiles at the direction of his family members but Guru Nanak Dev and Pooran Bhagat underwent difficulties for the welfare of the society. Therefore it was suggested to follow examples of the latter. The contemporary historical events occupy the central
space in the utilization of the 'history' when an example from the revolt of 1857 had been cited that how during the course of rebellion a British officer named 'Vilbi' preferred to destroy the arsenals to save his companions otherwise it would have been resulted in the destruction of the whole unit and while doing so he scarified his own life. 410

To bring awareness among the people against the British exploitation the stress was given to remind the public that they belong to a nation of the braves to face any challenge. 411 Also that the utilization covered the history of England when it was mentioned that the people had to make great sacrifices, long imprisonments and undergo tortures to achieve freedom from the monarchy. The literature is also critical of the British policy of divide and rule when it is led to the disputes among the Namdhari and the Muslim butchers that ultimately resulted in the large scale sacrifices of the Namdharis by the blowing away from cannon

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410 Ibid, p. 121.


Hira Singh Dard, Merian Kujh Itihasik Yadan, Dhanpat Rai and Sons, Jallandhar, 1955, p.
masks. References are also made to the commentaries of Karl Marx who viewed capture of India as nothing but destruction. The existence of caste system in preventing uniform force was seen as a hindrance in the struggle against slavery and the institution of creation of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh had been seen as an instrument for abolition of caste discriminations in society.

It is further emphasized that the people in Greek also worshipped many Gods and Goddesses like Indians. There were also many religious distinctions and like ancient India the Greek nation was also divided like the Indian princely states of Delhi and Kanauj under Jai Chand and Prithvi Raj. This led to the invasions of foreign powers who slaved the ancient Greek. These examples are stressed to show that the unity among different nationalities is essential to achieve freedom. To arouse a sense of opposition the examples of King Pores against his fight with
Alexander along with the great Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh were cited who taught the Afghan invaders a lesson to remember. The struggle of Rome has been quoted as an example of achieving progress when its population understood its greatness. The exiles of the leadership to Burma has been seen as the future colony of Indians and it was compared to the British prisoners who were dispatched to the Australia continent and were succeeded in its colonization. The literature also referred to the promises of the British made after 1857 and were never fulfilled. On the contrary, the government forcefully asked the Bengalis to cultivate indigo and in the process tortured them and many were killed. In the utilization the actions of the romantic hero Ranjha has been seen as waging struggle against injustice. At the same time examples of 'History' referring to the contributions of the Sikh Gurus,


Ibid, p. 108.

Ibid, p. 35.

Mazzini, and Garibaldi have been made utilized along with the role of militant Congress leadership including Bipan Chander Pal and Bal Ganga Dhar Tilk. The condemnation of British government for its suppressive policies were compared to the Mughal empire when the tyrannical officials were awarded by the appointment to higher offices. For instituting new symbols of struggle it was stressed that these should be aimed at propagating Indian history in order to generate the spirit of pride.

**ANTI-MONEYLENDERS UPRISING**

The period from 1915 to 1947 witnessed a number of agrarian uprisings beginning with the Anti-moneylender Agitation in West Punjab, the Kirti Party, the various Kissan Morchas, the Communist and Socialist struggles. All these formations centered around the issues of the agrarian classes including both of the farmers and the workers. To began with, in the year 1915 an anti-moneylender uprising of peasants emerged in the districts of Multan, Muzaffargarh and Jhang. Majority of the indebted peasants were Muslims and the moneylenders were Hindu Aroras, popularly called as Kirars. The causes of this upsurge were the increased poverty conditions due to the prevalence of famine conditions that led to a very high rise in food prices and it led to the great suffering of the lower classes of people including poor peasants. Also that the Muslim cultivators were charged higher rates of interests by the non-Muslim moneylenders. Further to complicate the situation the moneylenders stopped giving loans to the peasants and it led to the peasants revolt

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422 G.S. Deol, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
against moneylenders who looted wheat stocks of moneylenders and burnt the debt bonds.

In Ahmadpur Sial in Jhang district the first outbreak occurred. In Jhang district alone the peasants formed bands of 200-600 and committed about 70 dacoits. Soon the movement spread to Multan district where in Kabirwala tehsil 34 dacoits took place. The most important of these was the Basti Sikander riot. In Multan district there were 6 dacoity cases. The riots reached Rangpur, north of Muzaffergarh district. The influence spread and it reached to the Leiha tehsil and to Alipur tehsil in Muzaffergarh district. About 32 riots occurred in Alipur tehsil only. The total number of dacoities in Muzaffergarh district was 60 and the rising lasted for three weeks in Muzaffergarh district. The peasants also looted shops, burnt account books which recorded their debts and destroyed the property of moneylenders. It was reported that 4 or 5 persons died of injuries. The uprising was suppressed but nothing was done to relieve distress of indebted peasantry. ⁴²⁴

**KIRTI KISAN PARTY**

Before Kirty Kissan Party was set up on 12 April 1928 at Jaliianwala Bagh, a number of Kirty conferences had been held in different districts. A Kirty conference was held at Hoshiarpur on 6-7 October, 1927 under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Josh. Another conference was held on 17 October 1927 at Chak No. 50 in Lyallpur and was presided over by Tara Singh, a local peasant activist. At this conference a Desh Sewak Kirty Sabha was formed. Sometimes later, the Kirty leaders instead of organising Kirti Sabhas proposed to set up a Kirty Kissan Party to organize workers and peasants. Among its objectives and

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⁴²⁴ Master Hari Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.
aims were the establishment of independent republic of the labourers and peasants; to assist the economic, industrial and social movements and to organize labourers and peasants in order to mitigate their economic exploitation and grievances.  

The Kirti Party had its headquarter at Amritsar. It focused on demands of the peasants and labourers including the abolition of *Nazrana*, reduction of rent and fixed rates of interests. The Party in collaboration with the Naujwan Sabha also tried to capture various trade unions, press unions and the railway porters unions.  

Bhai Santokh Singh who was influenced by the Marxists ideology and had studied the Communist movement in Moscow started in 1926, a Punjabi monthly journal called *Kirti* with its symbols as hammer and sickle. This newspaper that emphasized on the problems of the workers and the peasantry and in turn a large number of them gathered around the newspaper and ultimately, it help the leaders to form a party of the same name. Although the name was the Kirty Party but due to the fact that 80 per cent of its followers were peasants and therefore at the popular level, it was generally called as Kirti Kisan Party.

In a meeting held at Amritsar in 1927, Sohan Singh Josh was elected its secretary and Abdul Mazid as joint secretary. Its other active members were Karam Singh Cheema, Udham Singh Kasel, Santokh Singh, Chain Singh Chain, and Bhagat Singh Bilga etc. Under the British rule condition of the peasantry became miserable and the party organized debt committees and they were active to abolish various

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Nazranas, land revenue taxes and reduction in their rates, fixation of interests on loans and also to the reduction in irrigation levies. The British government became apprehensive about the increasing influence and activities of the Kirti Party and the British government in 1934 declared the Party illegal and banned it. Consequently under the British repression majority of its members joined the Communist Party and began to organise various Kissan Sabhas in the rural areas of Punjab. The Kirti Kissan Party remained active till 1938 under the patronage of Communist Party when it again assumed independent character during the World War II till 1945.

So far the activities of the Kirti Party are concerned, these may be conveniently divided in two phases: 1926 to 1934 and 1939 to 1945. The programmes of the Kirti included the nationalization of all means of production, acquiring of land from big landlords and to be divided among the cultivators, reduction of land revenue demands and its imposition on the produce and not on land, no tax on small holdings, increase in wages of industrial workers along with reduction of working hours, provision of loans to the cultivators, and also machines, seeds and scientific assistance, reorganization of village Panchayts with representation to cultivators and workers with powers to impose revenue and lastly establishment of a 'Kirti' or 'Bolshevik' type state.

During the period from 1926-29 the Kirtis continued to declare that they were deadly enemies of capitalism and imperialism and wanted to install a workers and peasants government in India. It adopted the path of revolutionary mass action and to establish a completely democratic

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430 Bhagwan Josh, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.
As a strategy the Kirti Party emphasized to create discontentment among the ex-soldiers. On January 7, 1929, ex-Risaldar Anup Singh arrived in Lahore with a Jatha of 800 ex-soldiers to represent grievances to the governor. They were denied meeting and were dispersed by the police. Many of them were arrested. Serious discontentment prevailed among those ex-military men of Sheikhupura district who were demobilized without a pension or a grant of land. The centre of agitation was around Lubana villages of Sahad, Natheke, Toria, Mirpur and Thamke. Anup Singh organised meetings during 1926-28 at various places mainly in the district of Lahore, Hoshiarpur, Jullundhur, Ludhiana, Gurdaspur and Firozepur. His activities were supported by various newspapers such as the *Zamidar, Gazetteer, Milap, Inquilab* and *The Akali*.  

In April, 1930, Hissar Kisan Sabha headed a campaign against the payment of rents to the landlord in kinds. It was backed by the Congress workers and the Kirti Kisan Party. They intensified rural propaganda in the districts of Lahore, Amritsar and Lyallpur. At village Jhaman in Lahore district Police and military force had to be employed. The same show of force was repeated in Amritsar district. In certain villages of Sheikhupura numerous arrests were made to suppress the agitation against payment of revenue. In eastern districts the agitation had spread to a serious extent in all the minor towns and many of the villages. In Lyallpur, a series of meetings were held in the countryside. An 'All Bar Zamidar Conference' was held at Lyallpur on 20 June 1931 and was presided over by S. Mangal Singh.

In the south east of the province tenants were finding it very difficult to pay water rates. The Nilibar Zamidars Committees of

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Montgomery and Multan districts in their meeting on 18 July 1931 asked the peasants not to pay the revenue. The Kirti Party held its annual conferences in 1930 and 1931 in Lahore and Karachi respectively. The Lahore conference was presided over by B.T Ranade, a Communist from Bombay. He criticised the Congress leadership and asked the Kirti Kisan party to follow the political line of Communist Party of India. The Kirti Party throughout the period 1931 to 1936 followed the policy of criticism and denunciation of the Congress. By 1931 the Kirti Kisan Party had a stronghold in Amritsar district. In Jullundhar district it held a series of meetings in the villages and advised the small agriculturists to agitate for the immediate reduction of land taxation. This movement of non-payment of revenue continued in Amritsar district and later on spread to Sheikhpura and Gurdaspur and the districts of central Punjab and the north-west.  

From November 1929 on wards, large batches of Sikhs including members of the Ghadr Party returned to India from the United States of America and Canada on the pattern of the Ghadr revolt of 1915. The government took serious note of the development and arrested three Moscow trained Ghadr Party members. Till 1935 Police arrested some 40 trained Communists who had returned to India and were working at different places. These revolutionaries were Teja Singh Sawtantar, Gurmukh Singh, Pirthvi Singh, Iqbal Singh Hundal, Harbans Singh Bassi, Chanan Singh and Bhagat Singh Bilga. The Kirti Kisan Party offices were raided on 22 June 1932 and amongst other literature police seized copies of a cyclostyled Urdu pamphlet entitled "The programme of the Indian Communist Party". Members of the Kirti Kisan Party who were outside Jails continued to pursue their activities. A Kirti Kisan

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Conference was held at Nankana Sahib on 12, 13 November 1932. It was attended by 2000 people. Processions and meetings to protest against the judgment in the Meerut Conspiracy case were organised in collaboration with Naujwan Bharat Sabha in Amritsar and Lahore in which 900 people took part.

On 10 February 1933 a body known as the 'Rajse Quidi Chhurao Committee' was organised with the object of securing the release of the prisoners of 1914-15 and to assist all political prisoners. Delegates were sent to tour the province and enlist the support of the people. In the later half of the year 1933, a few conferences were held in Amritsar and Hoshiarpur districts. Further a Labour Research Society, Unemployed Workers Union and Press Workers Union were organized by Kidar Nath Sehgal and Abdul Mazid. In order to end all factional feuds Kirti Kisan Party was to reorganize into various fronts or leagues. Branches of this anti-imperialist league were established at a number of places such as Nankana Sahib, Lyallpur, Batala and Amritsar. In September 1934 the government declared the following organizations were illegal and consequently their activities were banned. These were the Anti Imperialist League, Punjab, its branches, committees and sub committees, the Punjab Provincial Naujwan Bharat Sabha, Lahore; The Punjab Kirti Kisan Party, Amritsar, its branches, committees and sub committees, the Amritsar District Kisan Sabha and the Punjab Kisan League.  

After the ban, individuals active in the above organisations sought to group themselves under the banner of 'Punjab Kisan Qarza Committee'. Its first meeting was held at Amritsar on 3 March 1935 and a General Committee of 52 members was elected. The objective was to organize small committees in rural areas to assist the peasants to obtain relief provided by the Indebtedness Act. A number of conferences and

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meetings were held and the Jullundhar district Qarza Committee established 60 branches at various places in the district. It held small village meetings at which speaker combined agrarian agitation with Communist propaganda. The Doaba Rural Uplift Conference was organised at village Patara in Jullundhar district during the month of October 1935. It was attended by more than 2000 people. The Conference demanded cancellation of debts and assessment of land revenue on the bases of income tax. It also denounced the oppressive methods of the government, criticized the National Congress, and urged the villagers to establish Qarza Committees.435

The district Zamidara league of Lyallpur agitated for their demands and sort to mobilise the peasantry on the slogan of reduction in the land revenue and water rates.436 The second phase of the Kirti Party was active during the Second World War in the form of complete Communist organisation. It organised the labourers and women and extended its influenced among peasantry. The Party started its newspaper called Lal Jhanda in September-October 1939. Its 800 copies were published and were distributed free of cost. It was a secret newspaper since the party had to stop publication of the Kirti. By this time the 'Kirti' Groups had completely controlled the Punjab Kisan Committee and took active part in the agitations of Lahore, Chadik, Chuharchak, Nilbar and Jullundhar. It was also active among the workers of Lahore and Amritsar. It organized some student groups. The Kirti Kisan workers were actively participating among the factory workers of Lahore, Amritsar, Lyallpur, Dhariwal, Abdulapur, Jallandhar etc. It was reported that 17 different unions organized themselves into a provincial Trade Union Congress under the control of Kirti Party. During this time the Kirti group

436 Ibid., pp. 112-113.
organized 30 strikes. Even the Punjab Kisan Committee was under the control of Kirti Group with its membership of 50,000. Both these organizations under Kirti patronage organized dozens of conferences and hundreds of processions.437

In September 1941 The Kirti Party organized Suba Kisan Conference at Fatehgarh Kartana (Ferozepur district). Police resorted to torture the workers, yet 30-40 thousand people participated. In Ferozepur and Amritsar districts three women leaders organized many meetings and stressed the need to establish women organization. The women leadership also actively worked at Muktsar, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Lyallpur and Lahore. With their efforts during the four months the strength of women in the Party rose to 2000.438 The last agrarian protest under the joint patronage of Kirti and Kisan Sabha happened in 1946, popularly called 'Mogha Marcha'. The Punjab irrigation department began remodling canal outlets (Moghas) in tehsil Ajnala of district Amritsar in order to reduce water supply to a number of villages in Ajnala tehsil. It began at the time of paddy sowing season and brought great hardships to the peasants. It was a device to fleece peasants and raise income of the government from water rates by cutting down supplies through reduced outlets, while keeping assessment of water rates at old rate and using the water thus saved to irrigate more lands. To protest against remodelling scheme, a deputation representing peasants of villages concerned petition the government The government did not listen the demand and agitation began. What started as a local struggle became the struggle of entire district. It started from the village Harse Chhina on 16 July 1946.

437 Chain Singh Chain, Kirti Party (During World War-II), Published by Desh Bhagat Yadgaar, Jalandhar, 1990, pp. 4-20.

The government arrested more than one thousand farmers and among these the prominent were Sohan Singh Josh, Achhar Singh Chhina and Gurdial Singh Dhillon. A number of *Jathas* of peasant women also courted arrests, one of being led by Bibi Raghvir Kaur. A big Kisan Conference was held at village Sehensra during course of a Morcha. Ultimately the government acceded to the demand of the farmers that the water out-lets will not be reduced. At this the Morcha called off and prisoners were released. Achhar Singh Chhina emerged as a prominent peasant leader.

The ongoing agrarian and peasants agitations led under the patronage of Kirti Kisan Party with the help of various Kisan Sabhas and the Communist Party during the period 1926-1947 adopted a number of methodological strategies. These tactics began with the publication of newspapers; *The Kirti, Lal Dhandara* and *Lal Jhanda* (The latter two were secret newspapers), help taken from other militant and Communist newspapers, *Desh Sewak, Akali Te Perdesi, Punjabee, Desh Darpan, Alan-i-Jung, Ghader Di Goonj, Mazdoor Kissan, Desh Dardi, Nawan Yug, Zamidar Gazettee Ludhiana* etc; the leaflets including *Railway Worker, Inqulabi Mazdoor* etc; pamphlet including P.C. Joshi’s *Azadi Ke Ley Aage Baro*, etc.; organizing the gurrela bands, distribution of secret and seditious literature, writing of slogans on the roadsides, schools, bridges and public places; organizing processions, conferences, strikes, hunger strikes, meetings, raising of funds, writing of circulars, pamphlets, leaflets and articles in newspapers; propaganda among ex-army men, workers, peasants and women; celebration of May Day, Highlighting the hunger strikes in the prisons of Deoli and Montgomery and celebration of the Nazarband weeks; presentation of memorandum and taking sympathy.

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and help from the leading members of the Bar Council of High Court, prominent doctors and journalists including the students. 441

Before proceeding to evaluate the utilization of 'History' by the organizers of these anti-imperialist agrarian movements, it is pertinent to mention some of the prominent leadership which covered the Kirti Kisan Movement and the Communist organization. The dominant leadership of these protests was comprised of Sohan Singh Josh, Anup Singh, Santokh Singh, Gopal Singh Quami, Munshi Ahmad Din, Darshan Singh Pheruman, Udham Singh Nogoke, Gurmukh Singh Musafir, Bhag Singh Canadian, Dr. Satyapal, Kidar Nath Sehgal, Master Kabal Singh, Lala Ram Chand, Teja Singh Swatantar, Bhagat Singh Bilga, Baba Karam Singh Dhut, Bhagwan Singh Longowalia, Teja Singh Chuharkana, Jawala Singh, Chain Singh Chain, Surain Singh Khela, Lohari Ram Pardesi, Giani Hira Singh Dard, Iqbal Singh Hundal, Dr. Bhag Singh, Baba Rur Singh, Baba Rattan Singh Raipur Dabba, Baba Kesar Singh, Wasdev Singh, Chanan Singh Dhakowal, Baba Isher Singh Marwaha, Baba Inder Singh Verka, Baba Bujha Singh, Gurcharan Singh Randhawa, Gandhrav Sain, Vishnu Dutt Sharma, Master Ram Nath, Sarla Devi, Kartar Singh Babber, Chhaju Mal, Kartar Singh Babber (Dumeli), Chanan Singh Tugalwala, Arjan Singh Sach, Ram Singh Ghalamala, Ram Singh Majithia, Bhai Sohan Singh, Naurangabadi, Arjan Singh Dhadra, Jagir Singh Kot, Nishan Singh Rajinder Singh Sarinh, Ajit Singh Garh Padhara, Ujagar Singh Bilga, Shakuntla Shardha, Sushil Kumari, Raghvir Kaur, M.L.A., Achhar Singh Chhina, Ram Kishan, Gurcharan Singh Sehensha, Chanchal Singh, Tirth Singh, Harbans Singh Karnana,

Dalip Singh Jouhl, Jiwan Singh Dukhi, Sodhi Harminder Singh, Usha and Ishar Singh etc. etc. 442

These agrarian protests were spread to the districts of Amritsar, Jullundhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Firozepur, Multan, Montgomery, Lyallpur, Sheikhupura, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Kaimbelpur, etc. In these districts they had their organizations and groups both in the big cities and towns along with the villages. Their organizational structures were more democratic and having its roots from the central committees to the village. 443 As has already been described these organizations produced mainly some newspapers, pamphlets and leaflets for the awakening of the peasantry and working class, so it is in these creations that they attempted to take help of history to incite the public and the masses.

To begin with their is mentioning of the miserable economic plight of the Punjabis who had laboured hard to construct towns and cities along with the big palaces, yet they themselves were forced to live in the huts. 444 The martyrdom of Kartar Singh Sarabha and Balwant Singh of the Ghadr Party has been focused while addressing the Punjabi nation to incite them for ending such condition by taking inspiration from the revolutionaries of Ghadr Party. 445 The atrocities committed by the


British imperialism in the form of deportations and exiles of the Punjabis were compared with their own domination in political power which has been compared to the prevailing state of unemployment. Further the British atrocities also find comparison to the torture underwent by Raja Hari Chand and Puran Bhagat.\footnote{446} The literature also criticised the British loyalists whom they considered as having without love for their land.\footnote{447} The Punjab was remembered as the land of five rivers which were responsible for its prosperity. The province was glorified or seen as the land of spiritual leaders who created Vedas and also the very fact that the Punjab also produced prominent Sufi saints including Sheikh Farid, Shah Hussain and Bulle Shah.\footnote{448}
The mutual feelings of hateredness were understood and the people were asked to unite as had been emphasized in the different religious taxes of Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. The sufferings of the workers were only understood by the God while the British government was careless in their mitigation. Yet the determination of the workers has been compared to the strength of the 'Sumer' mountain. There is expression of feelings of the fears the British from the preachings of the 'Kirti' newspaper and it was seen as an equivalent to the threat of the revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin to the government of the Czar. The revolutionary leadership is also conscious of the international developments who did not fail to mention the Opium Wars between China and England and their outcome in the form of the development of the Chinese nation. The appreciation of the brave
Punjabis who sacrificed their lives against the British repression and freedom find repeated mention and glorification in the Kirti newspaper.\textsuperscript{453}

The annexation of Punjab by the British was compared to the tactics of deceit committed on the heroes of the romantic folklores of \textit{Sassi-Punnu} and \textit{Heer-Ranjha}.\textsuperscript{454} The Kirti revolutionaries also received exhortation by remembering the repressions committed during the time of Guru Gobind Singh in the form of the martyrdoms of the Guru and his sons.\textsuperscript{455} The continuous and perpetuatory process of committing large scale tortures and repressions were compared to the tragic situation of Boston.\textsuperscript{456} In the struggle against the government the spirit of bravery inculcated through the creation of Khalsa was referred to raise the morale
of the movement to continue struggle and achieve victory.\textsuperscript{457} The imperial slavery and repression on the peasants and the workers in China, England and India have been compared to the tragedy of Quarbala.\textsuperscript{458} The policies formulated at the Geneva conference in which the local people were considered as the real proprietor of their cultural heritage also referred to in comparison to the imperial policy of enslavement.\textsuperscript{459}

For appreciating the brave spirit of Punjab there is enough coverage to the many historical and mythological events and the land was considered as rich that produced scholars, \textit{rishies, darveshas} and the great fighters alongwith the bravery of the romantic heroes of the folklore.\textsuperscript{460} The Kirti revolutionaries wanted freedom of the country and for that they were willing to sacrifice themselves. While mentioning the state of slavery in the country they referred to the \textit{shalokas} of Baba Farid on slavery in the \textit{Gurbani}. It was meant to awaken the

\textsuperscript{457} ir kh in kh t bN t lbk pd dJ hBki s iVh r hKnD ; Elgh s/f tu, dy pb oj hiVh sb/d o kK d/ fdb ftu, Tj dy fiVh pb oj hJ wbk dlmKi VK ftu.

\textsuperscript{458} fj zd skB, fJzrb?Iv, s/ uhB nzdo ft; feoshmK dhi bD bjh fet/w oj heopbk eopbkj?
i b/w f; sw nXbnKtr oj mK@T] h ; spo 1926H

\textsuperscript{459} n; h wbe jK; G t bksKd/ iVh ftu iBksith j/j/ esb b fbb d/tks/fw b/vkB ; koh dlmKd/ wbe jKn; h n/0/
@osh d/ evle# T] h Bt po 1926H

\textsuperscript{460} j Kj; dh; zkB jh jhebos BkB nGd, ir uBD elskfr nB dkJ Mf f; o s/ eoV/ yd.

consciousness against slavery. The role of Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, a Maratha in the Ghadr Party has been highlighted as someone joining the movement from the different parts of the country. Similarly the episode of Raja Hari Chand in the form of the God for the welfare of the subject has been emphasized. Shaheed Udham Singh gets prominent place for his action in England and was seen as someone taking revenge on the British. The strong determination of the Kirtis against British repressions was remembered as the strength of that nation who defeated the invasions of Changez Khan and Taimur lane. In preaching against the British government the Kirti literature also made use of the relevant shaloks of Gurbani. The miserable plight of the families of the those revolutionaries who were either hanged or exiled has been highlighted to
inculcate the spirit of tolerance and bravery. At the same time contribution of Master Mota Singh was equally appreciated. To encourage the Punjabis to participate the struggle militant verses were taken from *Gurbani*. The Kirti party literature occasionally compared the story of sufferings to the freedom and prosperity of the Americans and Iranians. The great sacrifices of the saintly personalities were seen as the light houses for the Indians. Also the slavery and poor conditions of Indians were remembered in comparison to their own rule and prosperity in history. The communal conflicts were destroying unity of Indians and in order to stop such occurrences they were reminded

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of the Rigveda culture of India when the people colonized the country through hard labour.\(^{471}\) The economic prosperity of the country was also seen as deteriorated due to the invasion of Alexander. The entire India was also seen as a peaceful nation and has been compared with the mythical Inderpuri (place of paradise). Guru Nanak Dev was referred to as a personality who preached unity.\(^ {472}\) Moreover the literature perceived pre-British India as prosperous and worthy of living and it was destroyed by the foreigners.\(^ {473}\) The revolutionaries also referred to the American revolution through which people enjoyed great prosperity.\(^ {474}\) Being a party with its objective of eradicating imperialism and capitalism kind to establish a socialist government of peasants and workers, there is abundance of the references to the administrations of China and Russia who succeeded in creating peoples government.\(^ {475}\) The Kirti newspaper
also included poetry created on the sacrifices of the patriots. A poem of such genre created in the memory of Bhai Santokh Singh is central to the theme of miserability of India.\textsuperscript{476}

The contribution of Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak in freedom struggle was seen with devotion.\textsuperscript{477} Similarly the role played by the great revolutionary S. Ajit Singh received great applause.\textsuperscript{478} The poem written on the brave sacrifice of Babu Harnam Singh of the Ghadr Party emphasized his sacrifice as unforgettable to the Punjabis.\textsuperscript{479} Similarly the death of Rur Singh has been commented upon with vigorous terminology and was termed as the one to encourage fearlessness among the Kirti revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{480} The slavery of India at the hands of the British was
seen as the end of their pride and challenge to the people.\textsuperscript{481} It may be noted further that the Poetry of the Kirti revolutionaries has equally made use of the references from history and mythology and when they ever spoke of achieving freedom they emphasized to take care of lessons of the Russian revolution and also the symbolism of the romantic folk-tales of Punjab.\textsuperscript{482}

There is evidence of taking inspiration from Ghadr Party in the literature of these anti-imperial agitations. To the extent that it reflected their deep understanding of the Ghadr movement since there is references to the activities of the Ghadr party in Singapore along with the references to the Ghadr Martyrs who were seen with enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{483} The literature stressed the need to celebrate days of the martyrdom of different revolutionaries as a symbol of inspiration for future developments of anti-British movements.\textsuperscript{484} To arouse the Punjabis to join the struggle for
freedom the literature took many examples from Sikh history but the prominance was usually given to the great sacrifices made by Guru Gobind Singh and his family.\textsuperscript{485} The massacre at Jallianwala Bagh on 13 April 1919 in which a large number of people including children were killed along with humiliations of women also finds place in historical utilization and this event was considered as an outcome of the prevailing conditions of slavery.\textsuperscript{486} During 1927-28 the Kirti struggle was at its peak with its aim on complete freedom and by this time its literature condemned the policy and programmes of the Congress.\textsuperscript{487}

There is repeated mentioning of the Ghadr Party heroes and their sacrifices especially of Kartar Singh Sarbha, Balwant Singh and Prem Singh.\textsuperscript{488} In order to organize the workers against the British they recited the role of the workers in Europe who strengthened the movement against
slavery and repressions. Again the use of Sikh history has been reflected at the time of harvesting the crop with hard labour and this concept was assigned to the gospel of Guru Arjan Dev. There is reflection of feelings of patriotic sacrifice among the children of the martyrs. The revolutionaries greatly condemned the role of British toadies who for their selfish interest had forgotten love for the country and were participating in generating religious dissensions. The Britishers were seen as those foreigners who came as traders and became exploiters. The international developments in America, Germany and England leading to their prosperity along with pre-1917 conditions of Russian society have been referred to the people as successful examples of peoples' movements. At the same time the literature appreciated the reforms in Turkey introduced by Kamal Pasha and also the developments in China. The historical incident of treachery of Shivly with Mansoor
has been compared to the similar tactics adopted by the British against the Indians.\textsuperscript{495} The literature also emphasized that the Punjabi Community being a nation of the martyrs would ultimately succeed in achieving the goal and was optimistic that their efforts would not be going in vain.\textsuperscript{496} Further there is condemnation of British policy of 'divide and rule' and it resulted in exploitation of the Indians.\textsuperscript{497}

The episode of the 'Shaheedi' of Mansoor that he was inspired from the example of Anel-Haq along with the struggle of folklore hero Faryaad to achieve his beloved Shirin after fulfilling a very hard condition have been mentioned as the examples of exaltation.\textsuperscript{498} The imagined historical behavior of the country that established it as a powerful nation and resulted in the respect of the other countries including Russia and Japan along with the great sacrifices like that of martyrs of Ghadr party were
further cited as the examples of utilizing history. The struggleful event of Indian history that took the lives of the martyrs and became part of the folk psyche has been compared to those who were reluctant to participate and were termed as dying the deaths of dogs. The literature saw the Gandhian movement only as meant for the capitalist and hence its rejection. The perceived pre-colonial unity of the country witnessed glorification. The blessings of Guru Gobind Singh in the struggle were invoked as a personality fighting against injustice. The 20th century has been dubbed as the era of slavery, repressions and starvation.
that resulted in mass sufferings.\textsuperscript{504} The early attitude of the priestly class forbidding the lower caste to worship in the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar and efforts of a group of the Singh Sabha in providing them equal opportunity to worship has been highlighted as an example of successful struggle to be followed in the forthcoming agitation. It is also emphasized that the Sikh Gurus gave the concept of human unity. Since the Gurus gave equal space to the writings of prominent Bhakti and Sufi saints in the compilation of the Adi-Granth by Guru Arjan.\textsuperscript{505}

The literature is also very critical about the attitude of Indians that resulted in the defeat of people during the Turkish and Mughal invasions and it has resulted in consolidation of slave situations.\textsuperscript{506} The religious ritualism and the related exploitation of the priestly classes was seen as the internal factors of exploitation and hindrance to the internal unity. Contrary to this prevailing scenario preference was given to the Russian model.\textsuperscript{507} V.I. Lenin the Soviet leader and revolutionary becomes
peculiar model in this context. The repression of the British has been compared to the detail of martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev who was tortured by the Mughal State. There are references to the mythological actions of the Gods in churning the ocean to bring out Amrit but the selfishness developed later on led to the sacrifice of many of the Indians for the sake of the country. There is no dearth of taking example of Sikh history especially the verses of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Teg Bahadur who gave his life for protection of religion. The literature is very critical of the socio-religious distinctions that despite reciting of Geeta, Quran and Gurbani. People were not very conscious of the main emphasis of the preachings of the Sikh Gurus who advocated unity of human kind.
The prominent traits of Punjab including bravery and honour prevailing in the spirit of the forefather was quoted to revive the spirit of protest against the British. Even the actions of Ranjha, the hero of folk-tale have been seen as a challenge to the exploitative feudal system and hence its glorification. The literature of the Kirti party also highlighted the brave actions pertaining to the three religious communities: Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs who were reminded of their great eras during Akbar and the incident of the Quarbala; the Hindus for their great heroes like Bhim, Maharana Partap and the Rajputs; while the Sikhs were declared as the nation of the lions. There is repeated mention of Ranjha whose struggle was seen as a fight
for freedom. Helplessness of country resulted in the continuation of the foreign rule who was collecting wealth at the cost of hardships and exploitation of the poor hard working Indians. The patronage provided by the British to the moneylanding class and the related exploitation has been criticized by comparing it to the 17 invasions of Mehmood Gaznavi. Worshiping of God as methodology against exploitation was not acceptable. For the first time heroes of the revolt of 1857 find space in the form of glorification of Rani of Jhansi. The mythological Brahmin hero Persu Ram and the duty performed by Hatim-Tai for the poor have also been quoted as examples of protest.
Prosperity in the factories of Italy in comparison to the conditions of labourers in India along with the movement of the workers the party viewed greater in comparison to the agitations for Khilafat and Swaraj. The prevailing conditions of exploitations were seen as the savagery of the early Turkish invasions meant to collect the Indian wealth. More space has also been given to the rabellious verses of \textit{Gurbani} that inspires the individual to make sacrifice for any just cause and in doing so become a brave mortal. The scene of Guru Gobind Singh's stay at the forest of Machhiwara has been compared to the prevalent position of the Indians. At the end their is reminder of the condition of the revolutionaries some of whom became martyrs and others were put behind the bars for their struggle for freedom. In that context their own contribution as a source of continuation of the struggle for the welfare of society.