

## **A Tale of Two Punjabi Peasant Agitations: 1907 and 2020-21**

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The Punjab as a 'model province' of colonial and post-colonial India has witnessed turbulent and testing times. Its agrarian character and structure determined power equations at local and national levels. Recruitment to the army and share in the total agrarian production provided strong bases to peasants. The British through legislation tried to subvert equations. The peasants reacted sharply in 1907. The colonial legislation was vetoed. The nation state in India invested hugely to create Punjab as 'food basket of India'. However, nature of agriculture transformed with technology and terms of trade have been set in favour of industry. The peasants and farmers faced deprivation and impoverishment as reflected in high debt levels and a spate of suicides. The farm laws enacted in September 2020 have created fears of further impoverishment and dispossession. The farmers have resorted to agitation. The peasants' agitation of 1907 has resonated in the speeches and rallies of farmers.

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The agrarian agitation of 1907 was a political manifestation of landholding peasantry of the central districts and canal colonies of the Punjab. The 'disturbances of 1907' alarmed the colonial authorities which resorted to repression to disrupt political mobilization.<sup>1</sup> Punjab has a long tradition of peasant protests going back to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is an extraordinary way in which the current protest resonates with the past. The cultivators revolted against the exploitation by private companies who leased the land. Moreover, the Punjab peasant protests were led by 'an intellectually sophisticated and mature leadership willing to make tremendous sacrifices'.<sup>2</sup> The peasants have again risen in Punjab and Haryana in particular and Western UP and parts of Rajasthan in general against the farm laws passed by the central government. Their mobilization and mode of protest since November 2020 till the date is getting resonance of the 1907. Its scale is turning pan-Indian; its prolongation giving a message of tough contestation for the government and the peasants.<sup>3</sup> The present attempt is to see similarities and dissimilarities in the nature of peasantry, agrarian economy and political economy of the colonial state and nation state in independent India.

### **I Peasants in Historical Perspective**

Historically, peasantries emerged in order to provision emerging cities and market towns.<sup>4</sup> Antonio Gramsci recognized peasant society and culture to be vital in the ideas and action of subaltern classes.<sup>5</sup> Teodard Shanin defined

peasantry having 'four essential and interlinked facets': the family farm as the basic multi-functional unit of organization; land husbandry; usually animal rearing as the main means of livelihood; and a specific traditional culture closely linked with way of life of small rural communities. There are number of analytically marginal groups which share with the 'hard core' of the peasantry but not all of its major characteristics.<sup>6</sup> These include agricultural labourers lacking a fully-fledged farm and rural craftsmen holding little or no land.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, peasants aim at 'subsistence' and produce cash crop primarily for survival and maintain their social status; farmers invest and expand the scale of operations.<sup>8</sup> Peasants differentiate into classes of 'small scale capitalist farmers', relatively successful petty commodity producers and wage labour.<sup>9</sup> Often the peasants are blamed for standing in the way of 'progress'; a failure to use land efficiently. These elite imaginings are typically espoused in order to promote policies aimed at pushing peasants off the land and turning them into labourers.<sup>10</sup> M. S. Swaminathan, who headed the National Commission of Farmers, provides maximal definition of a farmer as 'a person actively engaged in the economic and or livelihood activity of growing crops and producing other primary agricultural commodities and will include all agricultural operational holders, cultivators, agricultural labourers, share croppers, tenants, poultry and livestock rearing, pastoralists, non-corporate planters and planting labourers as well as persons engaged in various farming-related occupations such as sericulture, vermin-culture and agro forestry'.<sup>11</sup> In India, the problem of the Indian peasant offers 'the exciting intellectual challenge both on an empirical and normative plane. In requires courage to formulate the more *relevant* questions'.<sup>12</sup> In the present context, concepts like peasant and farmer or *kisan* are used interchangeably as majority of them fall in the category of small and marginal farmers and struggle for survival and participate in the market as well.

### **Contextualising Colonialism and the Agrarian Agitation of 1907**

Agricultural colonization and the Land Alienation Act of 1901 were the overarching features of colonial legislation with a view to isolate and stabilize the Punjab peasantry from the inroads of merchant capital.<sup>13</sup> The basic purpose of creating an export zone was successfully achieved by the colonial state.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, colonialization of agrarian economy had attendant consequences in the Punjab. The value of land increased. The prices of land increased from Rs.14 per acre in 1874 to Rs.47 in 1900.<sup>15</sup> Revenue extraction by the colonial state was intensive: In 1850, the land revenue was Rs.15 lakh and it reached to the level of Rs. 300 lakh in 1885. Its rigidity in collection was 99.1 per cent by 1890.<sup>16</sup> It resulted in pauperization and transfer of land from the peasants to moneylenders.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the province was hit five times by famines and droughts which caused impoverishment and land transfers. The famines of 1896-97 and 1889-1900 speedily skimmed off any economic surplus which the peasants may have generated through relatively better conditions.<sup>18</sup> The Indian Famine Commission (1901) reported that 'the rigidity of the revenue system forced the peasants into debt; the value of the land which they held made it easy

to borrow'.<sup>19</sup> It pushed the peasants towards indebtedness. In 1865, it was estimated that nearly five to six per cent of the peasant-proprietors were in debt; it was 80 per cent in 1879.<sup>20</sup> In 1880, nearly, 12 per cent of the debt was incurred through having to pay land revenue.<sup>21</sup> The peasantry passed through the processes of dispossession and differentiation giving way to tenancy cultivation. The area held by the cultivators during 1889-1907 decreased from 47.16 per cent to 37.46 per cent. Area actually cultivated by the cultivators decreased from 59.04 per cent to 46.37 per cent. There was an increase in the number of tenants from 30.55 per cent to 43.51 per cent during 1889-1907. Canal colonies had provided a demographic shift from the central Punjab peasants to move to the western Punjab. However, this relief proved temporary. There was a marked tendency among the middle peasants to cultivate as tenants to tide over economic pressure.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, increase in water rates in the Bari Doab Canal area by 50 per cent and the Colonization of Government Lands (Punjab) Bill 1906 in the Chenab Colony gave an opportunity to the middle peasantry to launch and raise voice through an agitation which was the first of its kind.<sup>23</sup> The raising of water rates in the Bari Doab Canal affected the landowners throughout the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Lahore.<sup>24</sup> The Government passed the Punjab Land Alienation (Amendment) Act in February 1906 to strengthen the restrictions regarding land alienations. Its aim was to exclude 'statutory agriculturists' for acquiring land under the Act of 1901. Moreover, this Act empowered district officers to disallow gifts of land for religious purposes, in case such gifts seemed suspect.<sup>25</sup> The Amendment Act accentuated the political disconnect among the urban politicians in the Punjab as they were already embittered over the British policy towards the commercial class that happened to be largely Hindu.<sup>26</sup> These official measures, coming in quick succession, united the rural and urban middle classes. The people discussed politics with much less fear and with much more confidence.<sup>27</sup>

### **Peasants Mobilize for Agitation**

In the agrarian agitation of 1907, new class alignments and a new mechanism of protest came into operation. Mass mobilization became a potential danger. The rural leaders also joined the protests, not only because of sympathy with the commercial classes but also from a similar fear of bureaucratic tyranny. For the first time, the professional classes were able to draw agriculturists and uneducated masses in protests against the government. Anti-government activity gained ground as new meetings and the press continued the criticism.<sup>28</sup> On February 3, 1907, thousands of residents of Lahore, irrespective of their caste and creed assembled to record their disapproval and emphatic protest against the Colonization Bill. Chaudhary Ram Bhaj Datta and Lala Dharam Das made fiery speeches. A resolution for the abolition of restrictions on the 'statutory agriculturists' was passed.<sup>29</sup> 'Grand Protest Meetings' of nearly 8000 colonists were held in Lyallpur. Lala Lajpat Rai rushed to Lyallpur. On February 17, 1907, peasants numbering about 15,000 took part in a meeting at Lahore under

the presidency of S. Gurcharan Singh.<sup>30</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh toured the Bari Doab area and organized land owners to support *Swadeshi* and to refuse the payment of new irrigation rates.<sup>31</sup> A public meeting was held at Lyallpur on March 20, 1907 where Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Ajit Singh, Lala Ram Bhaj Datta, Bakhshi Tek Chand and Shahabu-ud-din participated.<sup>32</sup> Students of the Khalsa College, Amritsar staged a hostile demonstration at the farewell visit of the outgoing Lt. Governor Sir Charles Rivaz.<sup>33</sup> On April 1, 1907, the *Anjuman-i-Muhibban-i-Watan* of Lahore held a protest meeting against the Colonization Bill. Though the notice of the protest was circulated by the students only two hours earlier, yet about 2500 people mainly the 'Hindu clerks' attended it.<sup>34</sup> A meeting took place at Rawalpindi district on April 7, 1907 to protest against the enhanced land revenue. It was presided over by Lala Hans Raj Sahni and Lala Amolak Ram acted as Secretary. It was resolved unanimously to set up a sub-committee for collecting evidence about the general complaint of over assessment of the land revenue. An appeal to the Viceroy to withhold his assent to the Bill was filed.<sup>35</sup> With a view to sending their message, the leaders used folk idiom. Sardar Ajit Singh in his meeting on April 21 at Rawalpindi recited *Pagri Sambhal O Jatta* (Peasant guard your honour) and exposed the character of the British rule.<sup>36</sup> Magnitude of meetings suggests the nature and spread of the agitation.<sup>37</sup> Sardar Ajit Singh, in his speeches, exhorted the peasants to stop cultivation until the water rates were reduced.<sup>38</sup>

Pleaders and landowners took significant lead in organizing political protests in the form of meetings and addressing them with political overtones.<sup>39</sup> The Colonial bureaucracy considered the professional middle classes 'inimical' to the British rule.<sup>40</sup> The secular character of the movement popularized it among the rural and urban people. The Hindus and Muslims were asked to unite against British *zulam* (oppression).<sup>41</sup> Soldiers attended political meetings in which the exploitative character of British rule was pointed out.<sup>42</sup> Pindi Das, in his paper *India*, (Gujranwala) gave a 'unity' call to the people to emancipate themselves from the 'slavery' imposed under British rule. He talked about 'economic nationalism' and exploitation under the British rule.<sup>43</sup>

### British Policy towards the Agitation

With the ensuing popular resentment, the government resorted to harsh measures. Prohibitory orders were imposed. A meeting was held and presided over by Lala Gurdas Ram Sawhany, a barrister and other signatories to the announcement for the meeting were Lala Amolak Ram Vakil, Lala Hans Raj Vakil, Pandit Janki Nath Kaul and Khazan Singh Barrister. The Deputy Collector summoned them to his court on May 2, 1907. A large 'crowd' of more than 20,000 assembled that day in the court compound. The proceedings against them were stayed under the instructions of the government.<sup>44</sup> Resentment among the native regiments began to be considered as a fair index of the state of feeling among the civilian population. The consequences of spreading political awakening to central districts, which supplied recruits to the army and to Lyallpur which absorbed military pensioners, assumed serious significance.<sup>45</sup>

The Military General reported to Lord Kitchener on July 2, 1907 that 'constant sedition in the ranks is undoubtedly wearing away the sense of loyalty'.<sup>46</sup> The colonial authorities reported 'unwillingness of the soldiers to fire upon the people to suppress disorder in the Punjab'. The bogey of 'contamination' of their men by the prevailing unrest was raised.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the prosecution of the *The Panjabee* (Lahore) was a part of the government strategy to checkmate the new sources of political mobilization.<sup>48</sup>

In 1907, Denzil Ibbetson, Lt. Governor, Punjab described the political situation in the Punjab as 'exceedingly dangerous' and mentioned about the *nai hawa* (new wave) that was blowing in the minds of the people.<sup>49</sup> The temper and tone of the newspapers owned and edited by the native Indians became a matter of 'grave anxiety' to the British administrators. Secretary to the Government of India wrote to Director General, Post Offices to intercept postal articles of Lala Duni Chand and Karam Das at Peshawar for three years under Section 26 of the India Post Office Act, 1898.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, *Anjuman-i-Khadiman-i-Hindustan*, Hoshiarpur also came under interception regulations.<sup>51</sup> The conservative administration of Denzil Ibbetson resorted to repression. The Home Department called for greater powers to make prosecution more a matter of executive rather than judicial.<sup>52</sup> A half-hearted attempt was made to organize the landed aristocracy against the middle classes to 'save' the province from 'disloyal agitators'. Its purpose was to improve social intercourse with the rulers.<sup>53</sup>

### Critique

In the agrarian agitation, the extremist politicians outnumbered the moderate politicians whose numbers were 26 and 17 respectively. Both groups belonged to the middle class; they were predominantly from amongst the educated professionals, like pleaders, teachers and journalists. The students also participated in large numbers.<sup>54</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh were arrested and then deported to Burma on May 7, 1907. The agitation was conducted with 'surpassing skill'. However, the repressive measures taken by the government had a 'quietening effect'. The government withdrew objectionable measures.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, people's reactions were directed to official measures rather than the independent actions. Colonial officers felt that the peasantry would seize all the opportunities arising out of the agitation.<sup>56</sup> Entrenchment in the canal colonies along with irrigational and market network put the middle peasantry in possession of some tactical control over its own resources.<sup>57</sup> Lord Minto, the Viceroy and Denzil Ibbetson, Lt. Governor, Punjab admitted that 'the troubles were largely agrarian in origin'. Other causes were attributed to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Mutiny' of 1857 and the plague. These were probably articulated to underestimate the real character of the movement.<sup>58</sup> The movement dominated in the districts of Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Lyallpur. Meetings were held in Delhi, Ferozepur, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Amritsar, Ambala, Multan, Sargodha, Wazirabad, and Hoshiarpur. Its social base got widened when the educated and commercial classes revived the Swadeshi phase which perturbed the colonial authorities.<sup>59</sup>

The processes of differentiation, dispossession, and impoverishment of the peasantry continued unabated and exacerbated after the World Economic Depression (1929). The prices of commercial crops crashed drastically by 1930, thus 'impoverishing the whole of the Punjab'.<sup>60</sup> In 1929, agricultural debt shot up to Rs. 135 crore and reached Rs. 270 crore in 1934. It was twelve times greater than the annual revenue and interest rate payments amounted to double the provincial income.<sup>61</sup> The Punjab was 'a heavily indebted' province which debunks the myth of wealth and prosperity.<sup>62</sup> The peasants could not invest in improvements in land and in increasing access to other resources such as cattle, water and production. In fact, food production had declined at an annual rate of 0.02 per cent during 1924-44.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, cropping pattern underwent drastic changes. The proportion of area under wheat declined. By comparison, cotton enjoyed a distinct advantage, achieving the highest profit in terms of unit cost of production.<sup>64</sup> World War II (1939-45) put further constraints on Punjab resources, both for men and materials. The peasants were forced to produce for the war front with controlled markets and rationing. It caused corruption, scarcity, hoarding and black marketing. Inflation eroded the purchasing power of the urban dwellers, salaried classes, wage earners, and the poor. Moreover, the Unionist model of collaboration collapsed which hastened the process of British withdrawal from India leaving the Punjab brutally divided in August 1947.<sup>65</sup>

## II

### Globalization, Peasantry and Farmers' Agitation of 2020-21

There is a powerful legacy of rural movements in South Asia that undertook struggles for the rights of farmers and peasants and agricultural labourers. In fact, rural movements have played a crucial role in the anti-colonial struggle.<sup>66</sup> For the first time since neoliberal reforms were introduced in the early 1990s, a farmer protest of this magnitude and duration is being witnessed.<sup>67</sup> Hanan Mollah, General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, has identified four main characteristics of the present farmers' movement: (i) the largest *kisan* movement; (ii) participation by about 500 organisations under the umbrella of Samyukt Kisan Morcha; (iii) a peaceful movement; and (iv) tremendous determination of the farmers.<sup>68</sup>

The Covid 19 crisis opened 'a window of opportunity to reform' the agri-marketing system and the Modi government 'grabbed' it.<sup>69</sup> During the raging Covid 19 wave, the central government brought in an Ordinance on 5 June 2020 relating to the farm sector. On the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020, more than 10,000 copies of the Ordinance were burnt in 600 districts. On 26<sup>th</sup> November, Constitution Day, it was decided to begin the '*Dilli Chalo* March'. The months of July, August and September were focused on protests mainly in Punjab.<sup>70</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> September the farm bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha and passed on 17<sup>th</sup> September and then on 20<sup>th</sup> September in the Rajya Sabha in much haste and without voting. The three farm laws are namely: (i) The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 (No. 20 of 2020);

(ii) The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020 (No. 21 of 2020); (iii) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 (No. 22 of 2020).<sup>71</sup> In Parliament, the debate was 'shabbily short'. Farm laws were passed by voice vote. Those who pushed the farm laws on the last day of Parliament are from other Indian regions, where procurement doesn't work. MSP (Minimum Support Price) in those parts are like 'ghost money'.<sup>72</sup> These laws are meant to remove agricultural trade restrictions to give boost to the agricultural sector and generate additional income for farmers. Farmers' leaders reacted sharply and called it an attack of federal character of the constitution wherein agriculture is a state subject. Farmers think that the entry of corporates will lead to a buyer's market.<sup>73</sup> A debate has ensued. Corporate media hailed the laws as ultimate solution to the agrarian crisis. The farm laws were meant to dismantle the monopoly of APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) and non-mention of MSP in these laws created an alarm of serious proportions. It has been claimed that the MSP covers only 8 per cent of the farmers.<sup>74</sup>

The farmers launched their agitation on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 in Punjab against the legislated farm laws by the central government. Meanwhile, Punjab passed bills to bypass central farm laws making a provision that buying below MSP was 'a punishable offence'.<sup>75</sup> Amarinder Singh, Chief Minister, Punjab, joined in and argued that the laws are 'clearly designed to destroy the *mandi* system in favour of a select few corporates'.<sup>76</sup> The government, for the first two months, ignored the protests; even labeled agitators as terrorists. The farmers resorted to 'Rail Roko' (Stop Rail) agitation from 25 September by sitting on railtracks at strategic locations: 938 passenger trains were cancelled; 943 partially cancelled and 105 diverted. Consequently, daily loss due to the agitation was Rs. 26 crore and revenue loss was Rs. 1670 crore. About 3090 freight trains could not be operated.<sup>77</sup> Samyukt Kisan Morcha gave call to *Dilli Chalo*. After two months of agitation in Punjab, farmers moved towards Delhi on 25<sup>th</sup> November from Punjab. In Haryana, the BJP led government tried to stop them by digging deep trenches, hit them with water cannons and threw tear gas shells.<sup>78</sup> The farm unions intensified the agitation. The agitation also began to spread to Haryana, the UP, Rajasthan, MP, Maharashtra and Uttarkhand as the Bhartiya Kisan Union affiliates were supported by the All India Kisan Sabha and Swaraj India. The farmers, especially the youth, penetrated through barricades and reached on the borders of Delhi on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The farmers rejected the offer by the central government to move to the Burari grounds. All entities engaged in the agitation are part of the larger entity All India Kisan Sangarsh Coordination Samiti (AIKSCS). Lakhs of farmers have pitched their tents with their tractors, trolleys, bullock carts and trawlers in four major sites at Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Chilla. Three leaders have gained prominence. The overall incharge at the Singhu border is Balbir Singh Rajewal; at Ghazipur is Rakesh Takait from the UP and at Tikri is Joginder Singh Ugrahan of the BKU-Ekta (U). Another leader from Haryana is Gurnam Singh Charuni. Decisions are taken unanimously after a thorough discussions and farmers are addressed daily from these protesting sites.<sup>79</sup> The Tikri border protest stretches to 15 km on the Delhi-Bahadargarh Road, and several thousand famers are involved. The farmers carried food

supplies for six months. Community kitchens (*langars*) have been set up for meals. Furthermore, the farmers from Haryana started bringing truckload of vegetables from their farms and distributed them free of cost. It has become a new way of protesting.<sup>80</sup> The BKU-Ekta (U) remains the largest peasant organization which remains active in 13 districts. It has mobilized 1.5 lakh farmers, workers, women and students. It is dominated by small and marginal farmers and women.<sup>81</sup>

Along with the farmers, the commission agents (*arhtiyas*) joined hands to 'fight for survival'.<sup>82</sup> *Arhtiyas* are part of the supply chain in North West India. They are not like middlemen elsewhere. They function simply as agents of the procurement agencies.<sup>83</sup> These farm laws are expected to increase information asymmetries contributing to greater exploitation and inequities for the majority of India's small holder farmers.<sup>84</sup> The farmers' agitation is deeply rooted in agrarian political economy. Davinder Sharma, an agricultural expert, states that the farmers' income increased just 19 times in the last 40 years, while the teachers' income has increased around 200 times.<sup>85</sup> A NITI Aayog study states that while farmer's income in nominal terms rose 9.18 times from 1993-94 to 2015-16 period, the real farm income (which takes out the effect of inflation) had only doubled in 22 years.<sup>86</sup> The contribution of agriculture to the national GDP has declined from 51 per cent in the 1950s to around 18 per cent in 2019-20. Farmers are earning less and less from their harvests, while productivity and production have gone up.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, farming in India is dominated by small and marginal farmers. In 2011, proportion of Indians engaged in agriculture remains 54.60 per cent; agricultural labourers constitute 54.90 per cent of agricultural workforce. In Punjab, 54.2 per cent farm households are indebted, exceeding all India range of 51.9 per cent. Overall, 4.4 crore households are indebted owning land upto 4 hectares.<sup>88</sup> Punjab accounts for 12 per cent of the national foodgrain production and contributes about 40-45 per cent of wheat and 25-30 per cent rice to the central pool.<sup>89</sup> Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog argued that new farm laws will 'unshackle' 43 per cent of the workforce engaged in the sector.<sup>90</sup> A statement by a pro-government economist Ashok Gulati raised alarm when he claimed that the government cannot assure MSP from wheat and paddy throughout India.<sup>91</sup>

A section of the corporate houses have supported the farm laws. The big businesses have exhausted options of making mega profits. The unfortunate paradox is that farmers have become poorer and food has become more expensive. There is the fear of big agricultural monopolies taking over farm lands.<sup>92</sup> Markets have historically failed to prop up farm incomes in the world. NITI Aayog's proposal to downsize the number of people dependent on agriculture for doubling the farm income belies logic. In the US hardly 1.5 per cent of the population remains in agriculture. Yet farm debt has multiplied to a staggering \$425 billion in 2020.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, Bihar got much attention as it had repealed the APMC Act in 2006 with the claims that it would allow farmers to sell their produce to whosoever and wherever they wish to; it would eliminate middlemen from agro-trade bringing private firms in agri-business and consequently increase farmers' earnings. However, private entities did not turn



up. Between 2012-13 and 2019-20, procurement by the public agencies in Bihar was not more than 15 per cent of total production; in Punjab and Haryana, it was at least 70-80 per cent.<sup>94</sup>

### **Towards Agitation: Major Features**

The protests got support overseas as lakhs of Sikhs/Punjabis signed petitions in the UK, the USA and Australia demanding rollback or rethink on the new farm laws. It spread to other countries such as New Zealand, France, Italy, Germany and Canada. They protested in front of embassies.<sup>95</sup> In the initial talks with the farmers, the central government admitted flaws in the farm laws and sought suggestions for amendments.<sup>96</sup> In these talks, 35 negotiators consisting of 32 Punjab farmers' groups and representatives of the All India Kisan Sangarsh Coordination Committee participated under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha which also conducted day to day proceedings.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the Supreme Court put a hold on farm laws and formed a four member panel which the leaders immediately rejected.<sup>98</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020, *Bharat Bandh* was observed with wide a response in Punjab, Haryana and other parts of India.<sup>99</sup>

In the age of information, national print and electronic media launched propaganda against the farmers' agitation. In response, a dedicated youth initiated a bi-weekly and bi-lingual paper *Trolley Times* as 'Voice of Kisan Protest' with a slogan 'United, will Fight, will Win'.<sup>100</sup> Its 2000 copies were printed and distributed freely. It had inputs from the Singhu and Tikri borders. This newspaper had its readership beyond these sites.<sup>101</sup> It reported activities of the farmers. It broadened its scope by writing on the tenants' and peasants struggles in the 1970s and 80s in Punjab and of peasant leaders' like Teja Singh Swatantar. It also reported on the Corona virus pandemic and on the youth. Moreover, the paper followed the template of *Ghadar* paper of mid 1910s which reported on peasants' revolts and plight of the peasants.<sup>102</sup> With a view to counter fake news and influence of the pro-corporate electronic and print media, which dubbed farmers as anti-national and Maoists, it was decided to set up a IT cell under Baljit Singh under the name of 'Kisan Ekta Morcha'.<sup>103</sup>

The farmers planned to show off their strength on Republic Day. It was decided to have parallel tractor parade exhibiting various phases of farming and peasant life on the model of the national parade on the Rajpath in Delhi on the 26<sup>th</sup> January. Thousands tractor were brought in from Punjab, Haryana and the Western UP. About 2 lakh farmers participated; 50,000 police personnel were deployed. Protests were held in 20 states.<sup>104</sup> Attempt was made to scuttle the peaceful march when a section of the protestors reached the Red Fort on the Republic Day. The police failed to protect the Red Fort. It was an attempt 'to discredit, demonize or restrict the peaceful agitation'.<sup>105</sup> Rakesh Takait, a kisan leader at the Ghazipur site, faced an eviction notice and water supplies were cut off. He feared violence at the hands of local BJP MLA of the UP. He refused to take water and appealed to his supporters to rush back. His tears acted as a spark. The farmers from UP, Haryana and Punjab rushed to Ghazipur. From Punjab, 2000 tractors rushed backed to the national capital.<sup>106</sup> The Kundali-Manesar-

Palwal highway was jammed on the 100<sup>th</sup> day of protests against the farm laws.<sup>107</sup>

Farmers got wide support from different sections of society with donations of money and resources. *Langars* appeared on the sites. Menus range from *paranthas* stuffed with *paneer*, radish or potato to curries of peas and carrots and *sarso da sag* and *makki di roti*. Other items include tea, cakes, packaged drinks, *pakorras*, snacks, biscuits. With a view to beat the cold 10,000 mufflers, socks, blankets were distributed. Water tankers, solar panels and inverters were arranged. Medical camps are organized.<sup>108</sup> The BKU-Ekta (U) had no dearth of funds in the initial stage and spent Rs. 7 crore, of which around Rs. 4 crore only on vehicles. Most of this was through donations. Complete transparency has been maintained in their records. The NRIs sent donations through Khalsa Aid. The World Financial Group of Canada sent Rs. 25 lakh.<sup>109</sup> Villagers pooled money, installed submersible pumps for uninterrupted supply of water, water purifiers, arranged mist fans and deep freezers and even air conditioners.<sup>110</sup> Village-wise donations became a regular feature to sustain the agitation. In Punjab, village *panchayats* issued *diktats* like either attend farmers' stir or face fine or even boycott. A fine of Rs.1500 on violations of the 'order' was put up. If a vehicle breaks down, the entire village will contribute for repair.<sup>111</sup> The BKU-Ekta (U) could collect Rs. 50 lakh in the Mansa district alone. Moreover, Ram Singh Bhainibagha (U), a district president, claimed that the union spent over Rs. 25 crore in the past 11 months since the beginning of the agitation.<sup>112</sup> *Langar* became essential at the protest sites where people could part take irrespective of caste, creed, colour, region and religion. The farmers decided to become self-sufficient in maintaining supply of milk and curd by bringing buffaloes to the site. Water pumps have been bored for continuous supplies.<sup>113</sup>

Protests brought the people together. They closed their differences.<sup>114</sup> A library was set up at Singhu border under the name of '*Janghi Kitab Ghar*' where books were issued free of cost and read in the tractors, trolleys and tents. This initiative proved to be a great hit.<sup>115</sup> New forms of entertainments like singing, social service, readings and playing games attracted the youth. Consequently, sales of liquor in rural areas dropped.<sup>116</sup> The government has placed jammers around the area. About 31 walkie-talkie sets have been assigned to volunteers for handling security logistics and stage management.<sup>117</sup> Literature is published and distributed to keep the agitation in proper shape. The BKU-Ekta (U) published a booklet exposing the agri-business activities of the Adani and Ambani business groups. About the farm laws it gives clear message: No Amendments, Complete Repeal.<sup>118</sup>

The farmers associated their struggle with the revolutionaries of the past, like Baba Banda Singh Bahadar who fought against the zamindari system and gave rights to the tenants.<sup>119</sup> Other hero included Dulla Bhatti, who had peasant roots and revolted against Mughal Emperor Akbar in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Kartar Singh Sarabha of the Ghadar movement was remembered on his birthday. Speeches and songs mentioned the great sacrifice of Sarabha. Another Ghadarite leader Sohan Singh Bhakna was also remembered on his birthday by the BKU-Ekta (U).<sup>120</sup> The peasant agitation of 1907, also known as '*Pagdi Sambhal Jatta*'

movement, acted as a template for the peasants. The contribution of Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai was acknowledged. The birthday of Sardar Ajit Singh was celebrated.<sup>121</sup> Bhagat Ravidas was remembered and so was the martyrdom of Chandra Shekhar Azad.<sup>122</sup> The martyrdom day of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev provided an opportunity to the youth to get inspiration. The day was celebrated at the protest sites and other towns of Punjab especially in the town Banga. Soil from Anandpur Sahib, Khatkarh Kalan, Sunam, Sarabha and Jallianwala Bagh was carried to the protest sites near Delhi.<sup>123</sup> Martyrs of the *Muzara* (tenant) movement were also remembered.<sup>124</sup> With a view to widen the ambit of the agitation, the farmers organized *maha-panchayats* at various places in Haryana, Punjab and in Western UP. It mobilized the countryside including women. The *maha-panchayats* attracted various sections of society.<sup>125</sup> There have been over 300 protests across the country in support of those camping around Delhi. India had never experienced such crises, even during the crippling droughts of the 1960s or even in the 1990s when India joined the WTO regime. It is worth mentioning that every fourth voter is a farmer in India.<sup>126</sup>

Cultural festivals like *Dussehra* were celebrated at protesting sites wherein children participated in large numbers in different parts of Punjab.<sup>127</sup> *Lohri* was celebrated at the Singhu border and was portrayed in the poetry of Surjit Patar. One lakh copies of the farm laws were consigned to flames.<sup>128</sup> Folk singers turned to their best tunes composed on the themes of farming, farmers and land. Punjab has a long history of singing amidst struggles,<sup>129</sup> reminding one of poetry centered on farming.<sup>130</sup> Singers like Kanwar Grewal and Harf Cheema argued that 'songs are for people and of the people. For this it is necessary to know the people'.<sup>131</sup> Farmers' songs and *bolis* sung at weddings and stage shows became new modes of protest. Flags, badges of farmer unions were in huge demand. Within six months, over 5 lakh flags and 10 lakh badges have been sold.<sup>132</sup> Prominent singers at protest sites include Kanwar Grewal, Babbu Mann, Harbhajan Mann, Jass Bajwa, Harf Cheema, Ranjit Bawa, Harjit Harman. Song which touches the theme is '*fasla de faisle kissan karuga*' by Kanwar Grewal.<sup>133</sup> The Naxalite phase of the late 1960s returned back with revolutionary songs like that of Jaimal Padda.<sup>134</sup> Revolutionary song '*mishala baal ke chalna*' by Mohinder Saathi is equally rallying old and youth together. It links the late 1960s Naxalite struggle with new peasant agitation.<sup>135</sup> Farmers' protests got world-wide attention when celebrities like Meena Harris, niece of Kamala Harris, Vice President of the US, climate activist Greta Thunberg, US House Foreign Affairs Committee member Jim Costa, You Tuber Lilly Singh, poet Rupri Kaur, UK MP Claudia Webbe openly supported farmers after Rihanna's one-line post 'Why aren't we talking about this?' appeared on Twitter. Indian actors like Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgan and Sunil Shetty, directors Karan Johar and Ekta Kapoor joined in the social media and reacted sharply. Farmers' body welcomed celebrity support.<sup>136</sup>

A significant feature of the agitation is the participation of the women in large numbers. Women's participation in protests has a long history dating back to the early decades of the twentieth century. Women are given responsibilities like men.<sup>137</sup> Women in Haryana took training to drive tractors for the march.<sup>138</sup>

Punjabi women share the same political and social space as men. The recognition and respect for their contribution and active role is being seen as 'a harbinger of change in a society where patriarchy runs deep'.<sup>139</sup> Women participate in agriculture and associated activities as labourers and also suffer from deprivation, debt and even suicides.<sup>140</sup> International Women's Day was celebrated on March 8<sup>th</sup> at the protest sites where thousands of women participated. Every activity, including stage, was managed by the women,<sup>141</sup> opening a 'new narrative of social cohesion'.<sup>142</sup> Their dominant presence remained at the Tikri border. The US based *Time* magazine acknowledged their spirit of struggle 'to fight to end'.<sup>143</sup>

Initially, the protests took various forms. From 26<sup>th</sup> December began picketing outside Ambani-Adani owned shops, malls and outlets. At this stage urban middle groups, teachers, students and workers were roped in.<sup>144</sup> Stores and petrol pumps owned by Reliance were gheraoed in various towns of Punjab. Railway lines, toll plazas, shopping malls of corporate owners like Mukesh Ambani were the main targets of sit-ins.<sup>145</sup> Jio mobile service of Mukesh Ambani faced the wrath when 1500 telecom towers were damaged mostly in Moga, Bathinda, Mansa, Patiala, Tarn Taran, Talwandi Sabo, Ludhiana and Faridkot. A large numbers of connections were surrendered mostly in rural areas of Punjab and Haryana.<sup>146</sup> The impact of farmer agitation were felt in foreign as well as Punjabi NRIs held protests in about six countries including Canada, Italy and the USA.<sup>147</sup> Reliance denied its plan to enter contract farming.<sup>148</sup> The pattern of protest changed with the deepening of the agitation. Punjab and Haryana were declared mostly toll free states. By March 2021, Punjab avoided the payment of Rs. 487 crore and Haryana Rs. 326 crore worth of tolls. A few toll plazas continued working. Total loss, including Rajasthan, was Rs. 814.40 crore.<sup>149</sup>

The class character of the protest got widened with the participation of farm and industrial labourers, petty shop keepers and employees.<sup>150</sup> Commission agents (*arhtiyas*) lent their weight to the stir with provisions like towels, blankets, milk, flour, mattresses and toothbrushes. Water-proof tents were put up at the Singhu border.<sup>151</sup> Research studies have indicated that like the farmers, farm labourers also carry a huge debt which has increased by 61 per cent in the last 30 years. They have little access to institutional loans and are forced to pay up to 20 per cent rate of interest.<sup>152</sup> Right from the outset, *dalits* assured their participation in the agitation.<sup>153</sup> New farm laws would affect rural and urban workers, small traders, consumers. These varied classes have joined the stir,<sup>154</sup> and held rallies and conferences.<sup>155</sup> Farmers' leader Joginder Singh Ugrahan of BKU-Ekta (U) underlined the importance of *dalit* farm labourers in the farmers' struggle.<sup>156</sup> Landless labourers have their own fears with the closure of *mandis* as it would lead to loss of jobs. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act may result in runaway spiral of food prices.<sup>157</sup>

The farmers' agitation sent strong signals to the farmers of West Punjab in Pakistan. Rallies were held in cities like Pakpattan, Okara, Multan, Khanewal.<sup>158</sup> Often the US model of big and efficient farming is touted through pliable corporate media in India. However, reality is different. Since 2013, farmers in the US have suffered nearly 49 per cent dip in net income from farming due to

crash in commodity prices. Moreover, more than half of the US farmers have negative farm income. In the past two years, the US government has pumped in \$ 28 billion cash support to help farmers to tide over the crisis, but the problem is more structural.<sup>159</sup> In 1973, the US Secretary of Agriculture raised a slogan: 'Get big or get out' implying that the farmers had limited options. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, peasant population declined from 40 per cent to just 1 per cent following neo liberal policies.<sup>160</sup> In 1977, farm laws were passed in the USA. In 1979, about 1500 tractors reached the national capital Washington DC. There is a similarity with the farmers' agitation in India on the issues of mode and method of protests. Farmers remained there for months. The then US President, Jimmy Carter, a farmer, expressed sympathies. In its issue of November 27, 2019, the *Time* magazine had in the cover story 'They are trying to wipe us off the map'. Small American farmers are nearing extinction. This is the fear haunting farmers in India.<sup>161</sup> Spain amended a law which prohibits the sale of food below the cost of production. The farmers are demanding such legal guarantees in India.<sup>162</sup> The American model is often cited as an example for bringing scale economies to Indian agriculture. However, a massive subsidy support is required. For example, in 2018, a farm bill made a provision of \$867 billion support for the next 10 years to enhance farm income and nutritional schemes.<sup>163</sup>

India's pro-corporate media tried to paint the farmers as anti-national but failed as farmers remain the torch bearers of national culture.<sup>164</sup> Peasant leaders remain determined to keep the agitation non-political. No political leader was allowed to address the protesters from the stage. Yet a large number of political parties and organizations expressed solidarity with the cause of the farmers.<sup>165</sup> The thrust of the farmers' agitation is a turn towards federalism.<sup>166</sup> Farmers' movement has remained apolitical so far. There are views that the farmers must have 'a say in politics'. The agitation also has the potential to 'impact global trade'.<sup>167</sup> World prominent agronomist and winner of the World Food Prize, Dr. Gurdev Singh Khush supported the farmers' MSP demand.<sup>168</sup> Eminent journalist and an expert on the agrarian economy, P. Sainth called the farmers agitation 'the largest peaceful peasants' struggle' in India. He called India 'a corporate-led state' and labelled farm laws as 'unconstitutional'.<sup>169</sup> Arundhati Roy called it 'unprecedented struggle in the world'.<sup>170</sup> Like the agitation of 1907 the present peasant struggle is secular and rooted in democratic principles. Moreover, it has been 'transformed into peoples' movement thus evolving around demands and aspirations of the working class'. It has the potential to bring about 'social transformation',<sup>171</sup> proving a 'new social laboratory',<sup>172</sup> and becoming a site to teach law and political economy through lectures of experts from law, politics, economics and farming.<sup>173</sup> It has gone beyond the *kisans*, as there is a broad based engagement of the *arhtiyas*, small shopkeepers, landless labourers and social and cultural activists.<sup>174</sup> Those in power have been caught off guard by the songs and solidarity among the protestors on the borders of Delhi.<sup>175</sup> It unfolds the Punjabi character of social cohesion and camaraderie through the common kitchen (*langar*), sharing and gathering irrespective of caste, colour, creed, region and religion.<sup>176</sup> It has exhibited 'new paths of struggle with patience and perseverance', as movements rarely follow royal orders.<sup>177</sup> It has

played a historic role to awaken the youth. Moreover, Punjab's farmers have staying power; coercion will backfire.<sup>178</sup> It has moved beyond boundaries of Punjab and has emerged as 'people's movement'.<sup>179</sup>

Both the peasant agitations spanning over more than 100 years show similarities of planning, persistence and perseverance; peasants and farmers sharing similar fears of someone grabbing their land through legislation. New fears have appeared like control over farm produce and crony capitalism. Charges of sedition under Section 124-A of the IPC are common instruments to suppress the agitation. Cultural resources like *langer*, songs and social gatherings remain the same with larger spread in recent agitation. However, presence of a large number of women is a new phenomenon transcending boundaries of patriarchy. Technology is sharpening and deepening the present agitation. It is high time for the Indian state to negotiate with the representatives of agitators within a democratic framework.

### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Mridula Mukherjee with Avijit Ghosh, (interview), *Times of India*, Delhi, 1 January, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> 'Kisan Ekta': Editorial, *Punjabi Tribune*, Jalandhar, 2 December, 2020, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Sydel Silverman, 'The Peasant concept in Anthropology', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1979, pp. 49-69.

<sup>5</sup> Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Eds. and Trans.), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp. 74-75, 210, 213, 273.

<sup>6</sup> Teodar Shanin, 'The Nature and Logic of the Peasant Economy- I: A Generalization', *Journal of Peasant Societies*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1973, pp. 63-64.

<sup>7</sup> Teodar Shanin, 'Introduction', *Peasants in Peasant Societies* (Ed. Teodar Shanin), (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Eric R Wolf, 'Types of Latin American Peasantry: A Preliminary Discussion', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 57, No. 3, June, 1955, pp. 452-71.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Bernstein, *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2010), pp. 3-4.

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- <sup>10</sup> Jim Handy, 'Almost Idiotic Wretchedness: A Long History of Blaming Peasants', *Journal of Peasants Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2009, pp. 325-44.
- <sup>11</sup> The term also includes tribal families or persons engaged in shifting cultivation and in the collection, use and sale of minor and non-timber forest produce: Shagun Kapil, Pratha Jhavar, Ishan Kukroti and Sushmita Sengupta, 'Short Shrift to Rural Economy', *Down to Earth*, New Delhi, Vol. 29, No. 19, 16-28 February, 2021, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>12</sup> P.C. Joshi, *Land Reforms in India: Trends and Perspective*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1976), 116. (emphasis original).
- <sup>13</sup> Sukhdev Singh Sohal, *The Making of the Middle Classes in the Punjab (1849-1947)*, (Jalandhar: ABS Publishers, 2008), pp. 94-95, 101.
- <sup>14</sup> Richard Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making*, (New Delhi: Archives Publishers 1987), Table 7, p. 57.
- <sup>15</sup> Karunamoy Mukherjee, 'Land Prices in Punjab', *Trends of Socio-Economic Change in India (1871-1961)*, (Ed. M.K. Chaudhari), (Simla: IAS, 1969), p. 533.
- <sup>16</sup> *Punjab Administration Report (1849-50 and 1850-51)*, Para. 54; *Revenue and Agricultural Deptt/Revenue*, Nos. 187-90, January 1894 (NAI, New Delhi); *Land Revenue Administration Report (1889-90)*, p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Land sales and mortgages to moneylenders: from 32,000 acres and 1,19,000 acres in 1874-75 to 74,000 acres and 2,10,000 acres in 1896-76 respectively: N.G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900*, Occasional Paper No. 2, (Durham: Duke University, 1966), Appendix A.
- <sup>18</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India: Punjab Series*, 1908, pp. 94-95. See also, Sukhdev Singh Sohal, *Credit, Rural Debt and the Punjab Peasantry (1849-1947)*, (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2012), p. 98.
- <sup>19</sup> P.A. Wadia and G.N. Joshi, *The Wealth of India*, (London: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 284-85.
- <sup>20</sup> S.S. Thorburn, *Musalmans and Moneylenders in the Punjab*, (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1885), p. 77. *The Punjab Famine Report, 1879*, Vol. II, p. 466.
- <sup>21</sup> H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette, 1936), p. 258.
- <sup>22</sup> James Wilson, *Recent Economic Developments in the Punjab*, (Suffolk Richard Clay & Sons, 1910), Appendix VII.
- <sup>23</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 3 February, 1907.

<sup>24</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, (Delhi: OUP, 1978), p. 157, n.18.

<sup>25</sup> S.R. Sharma, *Punjab in Ferment*, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1971), pp. 57-68. See also, N. G. Barrier, *The Punjab Politics and the Disturbances of 1907*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>26</sup> Ganeshi Mahajan, *Congress Politics in the Punjab (1885-1947)*, Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1979), p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> *Home/Political-A*, Nos. 178-80, July 1907 (NAI, New Delhi); *Home/Political-B*, Nos. 40-43, October 1907 (NAI, New Delhi); See also, Sukhdev Singh Sohal, 'Towards Reinterpretation of Agrarian Unrest of 1907 in the Punjab', *Punjab History Conference Proceedings*, (Patiala: Punjabi University), March 16-17, 1991, p. 332.

<sup>28</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 8 February, 1907; Richard G. Fox, 'Urban Class and Communal Consciousness in Colonial Punjab: The Genesis of India's Intermediate Regimes', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1984, p. 479. See also, Sukhbir Chaudhary, *Peasants' and Workers' Movements in India (1905-1929)*, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1971), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> S.R. Sharma, *Punjab in Ferment*, p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 19 February, 1907; Sucheta Mahajan, 'Anti-British Agitation in 1907 Punjab', *Punjab History Conference Proceedings*, (Patiala: Punjabi University), March 1981, pp. 290-309.

<sup>31</sup> *The Panjabee*, Lahore, 9 February, 1907; N. G. Barrier, *The Punjab Politics and the Disturbances of 1907*, p. 363.

<sup>32</sup> S. C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in the Punjab*, (Delhi: Concept, 1977), p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 158.

<sup>34</sup> Ganda Singh (Ed.), *Deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh*, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1978), p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Ganeshi Mahajan, *Congress Politics in the Punjab (1885-1947)*, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Home/ Political-Deposit/ July 1907*. (NAI, New Delhi); See also, Satya Rai, *Punjabi Heroic Tradition (1900-1947)*, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1978), pp. 12-14.

<sup>37</sup> Sr. No. Place (Persons)		Sr. No. Topic of Discussion	
<b>Prominent Persons</b>			
1.	Sialkot (300)	1.	The Panjabee Case
	Ajit Singh; Amolak Ram		
2.	Lyallpur (1000)	2.	Swadeshi Movement
	Ghasita Ram; Amar Das		



3.	Lahore (800) Hazara Das; Dina Nath	3.	Political Situation
4.	Amritsar (9000) Kirpal Singh Prabh Dial	4.	Colonization Bill
5.	Gojra (2000) Parmeshi Das	5.	Water Rates in Bari Doab
6.	Ferozepur (1000) Hazura Singh; Amar Das	6.	Railway Strike
7.	Gujranwala (5000) Gurbakhsh Singh	7.	Begar
8.	Hoshiarpur (3000) Lajpat Rai; Jaswant Rai;		
9.	Multan(6000) Sadhu Surja Singh		
10.	Gurdaspur (3000)		
11.	Batala (1500)		
12.	Rawalpindi (8000+200)		

Source: *Home/ Political-A*, Nos. 148-235, August 1907 (NAI, New Delhi).

<sup>38</sup> S.G. Gajrani, 'Agrarian Unrest in British Punjab', *The Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. XX, No. 1, April 1986, (Patiala: Punjabi University), p. 169.

<sup>39</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 9, 19 February, 1907.

<sup>40</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 7 January, 1905; 27 August, 1907.

<sup>41</sup> N. G. Barrier, 'The Punjab Disturbances of 1907', *The Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. VIII, Part II, (Patiala Punjabi University, 1974), p. 457.

<sup>42</sup> *Home/Political-A* No. 133, August 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).

<sup>43</sup> The Editor was persecuted under Section 124-A: *Home/Political-A*, Nos. 3-5, July 1907 (NAI, New Delhi); *Home/Political-B*, Nos. 39-77, July 1907 (NAI, New Delhi).

<sup>44</sup> V.C. Joshi, *Autobiographical Writings of Lala Lajpat Rai and his Speeches, (1888-1919)*, Vol. I, (Delhi: University Publishers, 1965), p. 124.

<sup>45</sup> *Home/ Political-A*, Nos. 148-235, August 1907 (NAI, New Delhi); *Home/Political-A* No. 133, August 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).

<sup>46</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 178-180, July 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).

<sup>47</sup> *Home/Political-B*, Nos. 135-145, August 1907; Copies of *India* (Gujranwala) edited by Pindi Das were seized from the possession of some soldiers at Mardan wherein ways to achieve *Swaraj* were outlined: *Home/Political Proceedings/* December 1907. (NAI, New Delhi); *Home/Political-A* Nos. 64-84, December 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).

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- <sup>48</sup> *The Tribune* (Lahore), 20 February, 1907; *The Panjabee* (Lahore), 9 March, 1907. *Home/Political-A* Nos. 178-180, July 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>49</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 4-70, November 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>50</sup> *Home/Political-A* No. 240, August, 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>51</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 60-61, October 1907. (NAI, New Delhi); *Home/Political-A* Nos. 64-84, December 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>52</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 19-20, July 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>53</sup> *Home/Political-A* No. 31, August 1907. (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>54</sup> N. G. Barrier, *The Punjab Politics and the Disturbances of 1907*, pp. 355-56.
- <sup>55</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 178-80, July 1907. (NAI, New Delhi); *Revenue and Agriculture/ Land Revenue-Confidential-A*, Nos. 1-41, April 1908 (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>56</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 154-56, October 1908. (NAI, New Delhi). See also, V. N. Datta, *Ideology of Political Elites of the Punjab (1900-1920)*, Sita Ram Kohli Memorial Lectures, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1977), p. 8.
- <sup>57</sup> Sukhdev Singh Sohal, *The Making of the Middle Classes in the Punjab (1849-1947)*, pp. 22-24.
- <sup>58</sup> *Home/Political-A* Nos. 148-235, August 1907. (NAI, New Delhi). See also, S. Razi Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian National Movement (1905-1910)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 97-98.
- <sup>59</sup> *The Panjabee*, Lahore, 27 April, 1907; *Home/Political-A* Nos. 148-235, August 1907, (NAI, New Delhi).
- <sup>60</sup> Brij Narain, *India in Crisis*, (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1939), p. 2.
- <sup>61</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 7 June, 1934; H.N. Mitra (Ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1933, p. 230.
- <sup>62</sup> M. L. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977), first published 1925, p. 9, 14, 18, 20, 209. See also, Mridula Mukherjee, *Colonializing Agriculture: The Myth of Punjab Exceptionalism*, (New Delhi: Sage, 2005).
- <sup>63</sup> G. Kaushal, *Economic History of India (1757-1966)*, (New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1997), pp. 159-60.
- <sup>64</sup> M.M. Islam, *Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj (1880-1947)*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), pp. 11, 76.
- <sup>65</sup> Sukhdev Singh Sohal, 'Food Crisis, Inflation and Political Control in Punjab (1940-47)', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 20, Nos. 2-3, 2013, University of California, Santa Barbara Campus, USA, pp. 260.

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<sup>66</sup> Ahilan Kadirgamar and Hashim bin Rashid, 'Convergence of Agrarian Discontent in South Asia', *The Hindu*, Chennai, 15 December 2020.

<sup>67</sup> J.K. Raja Lakshmi, 'At Ground Zero', *Frontline*, Mumbai, Vol. 27, No. 26, 19 December 2020- 1 January 2021, pp. 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> *Times of India*, Delhi, 28 December 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Ashok Gulati, 'Let's not waste a Crisis', *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 26, October 4 2020, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> J.K. Raja Lakshmi, 'At Ground Zero', *Frontline*, Mumbai, Vol. 27, No. 26, 19 December 2020- 1 January 2021, pp. 10-11.

<sup>71</sup> First and second Acts were approved by the President on 24 September and third on 26 September 2020: *The Gazette of India Extraordinary* Part II Section I, Ministry of Law and Justice, Nos. 45, 46, 47, Dated 27 September, 2020.

<sup>72</sup> Ashutosh Varshney, 'Sow Seeds of Trust', *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 16 December 2020. See also, Yoginder K. Alagh, 'One Law can't fit all', *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 17 February, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> *Times of India*, Delhi, 22 September 2020. Pulpure Balakrishnan, 'Farm Debate: Focus on access to Food', *Hindustan Times*, Chandigarh, 25 December, 2020.

<sup>74</sup> *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 25 September; 6 October, 2020.

<sup>75</sup> The Bills were to pass through the Governor making it difficult to get approval: *The Tribune*, Jalandhar, 21 October, 2020, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Amarinder Singh, 'This is not the 1991 moment in Agriculture', *Hindustan Times*, Chandigarh, 3 November, 2020.

<sup>77</sup> *Times of India*, Delhi, 17 November, 2020.

<sup>78</sup> *Punjabi Tribune*, Jalandhar, 27 November, 2020, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> J.K. Raja Lakshmi, 'At Ground Zero', *Frontline*, Mumbai, Vol. 27, No. 26, 19 December 2020- 1 January 2021, pp. 10-11.

<sup>80</sup> *Times of India*, Delhi, 4 December, 2020.

<sup>81</sup> Rajni Basu, 'Long March to Peasant Unity', *Frontline*, Mumbai, Vol. 27, No. 26, 19 December, 2020 -1 January 2021, pp. 15-16.

<sup>82</sup> There is total number of 40,000 *arhtiyas* in Punjab with clerks working about 1 lakh and labourers about 10 lakh: *Times of India*, Delhi, 22 September 2020.

<sup>83</sup> Yoginder K. Alagh, 'One Law can't fit all', *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 17 February, 2021.

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<sup>84</sup> M. Manjula, 'A smallholder in the Agriculture Market Reform in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai, Vol. LVI, No. 15, 10 April, 2021, p. 24.

<sup>85</sup> *The Tribune*, Jalandhar, January 11, 2021, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Report of the Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income headed by Ashok Dalwai, 2018: quoted by Joe C. Mathew, 'Smart Farming', *Business Today*, Mumbai, Vol. 28, No. 3, 28 January-10 February, 2019, p. 31.

<sup>87</sup> Shagun Kapil, Pratha Jhavar, Ishan Kukroti and Sushmita Sengupta, 'Short Shift to Rural Economy', *Down to Earth*, New Delhi, Vol. 29, No. 19, 16-28 February 2021, p. 27.

<sup>88</sup> *Indian Express*, Mumbai, 23 September 2020.

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<sup>90</sup> Amitabh Kant, 'Agriculture's Watershed Moment', *The Times of India*, 22 September 2020.

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