

PEASANT CONSCIOUSNESS AND RESISTANCE IN COLONIAL PUNJAB: A CASE STUDY OF PEASANTS IN THE PUNJAB PROVINCE FROM 1930S-1940S

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ABSTRACT

This study examines at the socioeconomic and political causes of the widespread unrest against British colonial rule that accompanied the peasant rebellion in Punjab Province in the 1930s and 1940s. Punjab was an agrarian region that suffered greatly from the Great Depression as a result of high land taxes, revenue policies that were exploitative, and debt to moneylenders. Peasants, who were largely repressed by powerful landowners and colonial rulers, staged marches, strikes, and uprisings in order to seek equitable treatment, debt relief, and land reforms. The rural population was crucially mobilized by the advent of communist ideals, especially through the Kirti Kisan Party. Peasants' resistance was further heightened by their involvement in the Quit India Movement and other minor revolutionary operations. Alongside the brutal repression of the colonial state, this time also saw the communalization of politics leading up to 1947's Partition, which finally caused the disintegration of class-based solidarity. Though mostly overshadowed by communal conflicts during the latter years of British control in the region, the study demonstrates how peasant movements in Punjab challenged colonial authority and contributed to the greater anti-colonial movement.

Key words: Peasants, colonial, resistance, Punjab and British rule.

INTRODUCTION

In colonial India, peasant resistance stands for one of the most important—yet frequently disregarded—aspects of the anti-colonial movement. India's agrarian economy, which the British colonial government excessively taxed and exploited, led to significant dissatisfaction among peasants, especially in the Punjab Province. Punjab, which was well-known for its lush fields and substantial agricultural output in India by the 1930s and 1940s, turned into a hotbed of peasant agitation at this time. Peasant resistance was profoundly impacted by the emergence of nationalist emotions, political mobilization, and increasing economic hardship at this time. Under British administration, the Punjabi peasantry suffered several difficulties, including as oppressive land revenue schemes, high taxes, and debt cycles. In addition, the effects of world events like World War II and the Great Depression made

their suffering worse and encouraged revolt. The character of peasant resistance during this period was formed by the complex interactions of economic hardship, religious identity, and political groups, which included the Muslim League, the Congress, and Communist organizations (Huijsmans, 2021).

The purpose of this essay is to examine the dynamics of peasant resistance in Punjab in the 1930s and 1940s, emphasizing the ways in which political upheaval and economic hardships came together to create organized opposition. This study sheds light on the larger anti-colonial fight and the ways that rural Punjab was crucial in paving the way for independence by analyzing the roles of important movements, the impact of colonial policies, and the activities of the peasants themselves. A few new movements emerged in the 1930s, including the Majlis Ahrar movement, the

Khaksar movement, the Civil Disobedience movement, and the quiet resistance of some Punjabi communities against the policies of the British Government. In one way or another, these movements were initiated to voice opposition to the British Empire and to stir up trouble with the colonial government. As a result, this study examines the phenomena of the time when several new local and religio-political groups emerged in Indian politics following the collapse of the Khilafat Drive and the defeat of the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League. They were effective in capturing the attention of the Punjabi community by concentrating primarily on local issues. Peasant in this phase were the main resistance forces against the colonial forces which have their own way of resistances and some were part of the Muslims and Hindus political parties. History in one way silent on the role of the peasants in resistance against the British colonialism. The peasantry is likely to have held a significant position in their thoughts and lives for a demand or issue that is strong enough to inspire resistance and revolution. And since "behind every such popular direct action some legitimizing sense of right has to be contested (Chandra, 2008).

Peasants suffered greatly as a result of the economic crisis that struck at the beginning of the 20th century and the social and political repercussions that followed. They had to fight hard to live because moneylenders demanded astronomical interest rates, landholdings became economically unfeasible, the burden of land revenue became burdensome, and diseases caused a great deal of death and disruption. The tiny peasantry gave their responses in different ways. A considerable portion emigrated to South America, Australia, England, Canada, East Africa, South East Asia, and the United States. Hundreds of people manage to enlist in the British Indian Army in exchange for meagre regular salaries, even though the army's mission is to combat the raj's enemies abroad (Hempson, 2018).

Literature review

A number of research articles and thesis have been produced on role of peasants in the politics of colonial Punjab. Some of the peer reviewed articles are reviewed to trace out the research gap and to get the results of this research study. This article examines the conflicting beliefs, recollections,

histories, and sociopolitical contexts surrounding Chaudhari Mulkiram's career from the 1920s to the mid-1950s. Mulkiram lived from April 1910 to August 1954. Mulkiram was a member of the Dhangar caste in Meerut, which is a subcaste of the Khatik caste. He was the United Provinces' (UP) first Dalit to be eligible for the Public Service Commission in 1939. His interactions with the Arya Samaj, Congress, and Scheduled Caste Federation, as well as his socioreligious and sociopolitical views, are depicted in this article. It reveals the portrayal of his life and work by these agencies' representatives (Kumar, 2023). Scholars working under the 'subaltern' banner have identified two main themes: peasant resistance and consciousness in colonial India, and the peasantry's relationship to the national struggle. This work attempts to investigate some of the fundamental ideas and presumptions of this 'new' methodology, along with their ramifications, with a particular focus on the first theme. Additionally, the author attempts to evaluate how well this new strategy has expanded our understanding of peasant resistance and consciousness (Mukherjee, 1988).

The peasant uprisings, which were a symbol of the Indian people's consciousness of the colonial force and their yearning for self-government, were crucial to the Indian independence movement. The purpose of this research study is to outline the key developments in the struggles of the Punjab province's peasants, with a particular emphasis on the 1907 agricultural uprisings. The Punjab province's peasant and agrarian classes were able to fight the colonial force and the political forces promoting India's independence and self-government thanks to the revolutionary uprising of 1907. The historical analytical approach is used in this research study to identify the study's research gaps (Shah, 2023).

Peasant Resistance and its phases in the Punjab Province from 1930s

The Punjab colonial government imposed a strict land revenue system that subjected the peasantry to high taxes. High tax assessments were imposed on the peasantry, particularly on smallholders and tenants, irrespective of agricultural harvests or natural calamities like as floods or droughts. Due to excessive taxes, meager crops, and the need for credit from moneylenders, a large number of peasants became entangled in debt cycles. Peasants

frequently experienced debt bondage, which resulted in them losing their land to creditors and worsening their financial circumstances. The collapse of international agricultural markets in the 1930s, especially during the Great Depression, severely reduced the prices of cash commodities like wheat and cotton, which were vital to the Punjabi peasantry. Many peasants were unable to pay back loans or taxes as a result of the price decrease. The allotment of land was frequently biased in favor of affluent landowners in several areas of Punjab, particularly the canal colonies, marginalizing the peasantry. A landlord class emerged as a result of the British canal irrigation projects, which concentrated a large amount of land in the hands of a small number of people. One of the main recruiting grounds for the British Indian Army was Punjab. By the late 1930s, with World War II well underway, the British were stepping up their recruitment efforts and providing soldiers with incentives and land. But the agricultural economy was further burdened by the cost of sending young men to fight, in addition to the loss of productive labor (Chatterjee, 1990).

Punjab's Sikh peasantry was among the most politically engaged, particularly in the districts of Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Amritsar. Numerous smallholders harbored resentment towards the consolidation of land under the ownership of a small number of landlords. The foundation for organized resistance against the British had already been established by the earlier-started Gurdwara Reform Movement. Peasants frequently combined their political and religious grievances to form rallies around Sikh religious institutions. Peasants participated in significant numbers in the nationalist movements that gained traction in the 1940s, most notably the Quit India Movement in 1942. Peasants in Punjab joined the chorus of voices demanding an end to British rule, sparking demonstrations, strikes, and sometimes violent clashes with colonial authorities (Mooney, 2013). Punjab peasants were mobilized by the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India, respectively. While the Communists gained more clout through the Kirti Kisan Party, particularly in the 1940s, the Congress tended to support moderate policies. The difference in ideologies affected the ways in which various peasant groups participated in resistance movements. In an attempt to preserve the status

quo, the Unionist Party—which stood for Punjabi landlords and agricultural interests—supported British policies and claimed to be defending rural populations. But there was conflict between the party and rural peasants as a result of its policies, which frequently catered more to landlords than to smallholder peasants. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Punjabi peasants' opposition influenced the conversation surrounding agrarian reform. Peasant movements' push, along with post-World War II economic shifts and India's approaching independence, resulted in important reforms throughout the post-colonial era. Among these were initiatives to redistribute land and do away with zamindari, or landlord, systems. Punjabi peasant resistance played a role in the nationalist movement's overall fight against British authority. The rural masses' involvement in anti-colonial activities, despite its frequent fragmentation, was essential in stepping up pressure on the British to leave India (Sohal, 2022). The 1930s and 1940s saw a rise in nationalist feeling, exploitative colonial policies, and economic hardships as the main causes of peasant rebellion in Punjab. The struggles of the Punjabi peasantry were crucial in forming the political climate of the region prior to independence, even if the movements were not always cohesive and were inspired by many ideologies. These movements' impact persisted in influencing post-colonial India's agrarian politics and reforms, especially in Punjab, which continued to be a crucial agricultural area (Grewal & Sharma, 1987).

India was under British colonial domination during this time, with Punjabi people in particular fighting the British. The Marxist perspective of Punjabis was the other new facet of resistance that historians noticed in the latter part of the 1930s. Communists and socialists were also impacted by these events, and they had to come up with new strategies to maintain and strengthen their political positions in Punjab and throughout India. Numerous rallies and protests in support of peasant rights have taken the shape of different demonstrations. The 1940s saw political and constitutional turmoil in India, and the outbreak of the Second World War put the country on the brink of bloodshed, which gave rise to the Quit India Movement. The communist element began to permeate Indian society and politics in the second decade of the 20th century, particularly in colonial Punjab, when some Ghadar Party

members, particularly Santokh Singh or Rattan Singh, began distributing and evangelizing Marxism to Punjabi migrants. They were all fervently committed to their goal of bringing about a socialist revolution in the Indian Subcontinent and securing liberation from colonial domination. The efforts of the Kirti Kisan Party and the Communist Party of India are noteworthy in this regard (Deol, 2019).

In early 1928, the Punjab Kirti Kisan Party was established. The Ghadr Group was responsible for reviving this party by endorsing radical patriotism in the Punjab. Its disenchantment with the use of force prompted a search for fresh and potent strategies to combat colonialism and private industry, which eventually gave rise to Punjab's agricultural crusade. The Kirti, the weekly publication issued by this party, served as the foundation for the Kirti Kisan Party and contributed to the awakening of Punjab's rural populace. The association held its second meeting in Lyallpur, Faisalabad, where Sohan Singh Josh was elected as administrator and M.A. Majid as mutual administrator. To confirm directives and rules, a small committee comprising Kidar Nath Sehgal's allies M.A. Majid, Sohan Singh Josh, Gopal Singh Qaumi, and Hira Singh Drad was formed. Six farm-related issues were discussed and resolved, including reduced taxes, terrestrial income, the removal of Abiana, and irrigatory water shortages (Bains, 1962).

Communist Party India attacked the Congress as bourgeois class and attempted to monopolize the anti-imperialist movement exclusively before 1935. To support the ongoing anti-imperialist movement, the Communist Party of India teamed up with the Congress and the Congress Socialist Party in 1935. Through its cooperation with these two parties, known as the "united front," peasant movements were strengthened and the All-India Kisan Sabha was established. The Faizpur agrarian program was approved by Congress, and trade unions demonstrated significant involvement in important industrial areas. Four conferences took place in rural Mahilpur, Sarhali, Cheena Kalan, and Gardhiwala, where Kirtis was a key player. Complete independence, the liberation of political prisoners, and regional economic challenges were the specific topics of discussion. The fourth conference took place in Cheena Kalan on June 20, 1936, with a shift in focus towards the demands of

the local agitating farmers, the relief of indebted peasants, and the decline in land income in the Patiala and Kapurthala areas. Since the Board was not listed and had no office in the area, this agitation or demand was widely regarded as part of the Peasant Crusade, which had lasted a long time in Patiala State until the defensive actions could be taken. Between 1930 and 1931, the Akali Crusade took on a variety of political guises, including Communists, the Muzara Movement, and Punjab Riyasti Parja Mandal. In the first instance, the C.I.D. was tasked with investigating a Gurmukhi weekly newspaper published under the name Muzdur Kisan, which contained pieces critical of the Patiala Darbar. This periodical was outlawed in the province, and the campaign stayed dormant until 1935 (Grewal & Bainiwal, 2022).

The press reported that a Kisan assembly dubbed the "Shandar Kisan Conference" and hosted by Mansa Ram of Dhohar will take place at Longowal on November 7 and 8, 1936. The commercials revealed that a sense of unease would spread to non-farmers and peasants against the Mahajan class and Shahukars as a community that was draining the Zamindars' blood and was expected to hold the Administration accountable, criticizing the State management. Bhagwan Singh Longowalia was a highly civic-minded and enthusiastic young guy from Patiala who tirelessly worked for the farmers who were under oppression. The Kirti Kis'an Party workers Karam Singh Mann, Bar-at-Law, Lahore, and his companion Gurmukh Singh Ambalvi, as well as Feroze-uddin Kansur, Inder Singh Sansapur Jullundur District, Mohan Lai Gupta Gujranwala and his wife Khalil Ahmed "Sabri" of Amritsar, and the village of Longowal were visited by them on July 24, 1936. Two Longowal residents approached them and declared that no meeting was to be held there and that a false photograph had been supplied, which they claimed the Panchayat of Longowal had previously refuted. They also informed them that it was suitable for them to return because the rural populace as a whole opposed convening the Kirti Kisan Meeting. As a result, all peasant employees had turned back. The unrest stemming from the spike in Begowal Muslim peasantry persisted in the southern Kapurthala State region when an additional incident intensified tensions among the community, exacerbating an already volatile

situation. Moneylenders and merchants in Kapurthala started their own civil disobedience when the Land Alienation ordinance was imposed in the first week of January 1934, primarily due to pressure from the Zamindara Movement. Additionally, they presented a request for the creation of an Executive Council to handle the government of the state. In response to the demand, Maharaja Jagjeet formed a six-member Council, with two Muslims serving as deputies (Kamran, 2023).

Main personalities among the peasants in the Punjab to lead the struggle

A number of influential figures emerged from Punjab's political groups and peasant class between 1930 and 1947, taking the lead in the resistance effort against British colonial rule. These figures played a crucial role in peasant organization, political consciousness building, and grievance articulation. Chaudhary Chhotu Ram, a well-known Jat leader and member of the Unionist Party, worked hard to improve the lot of peasants, particularly those in the Jat community. He is well recognized in Punjab as a champion of farmers' rights, having been born in Rohtak (in what is now the state of Haryana). As the head of the Unionist Party, Chhotu Ram fought against the domination of moneylenders and urban elites and promoted the rights of peasants, especially Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh farmers. The Punjab Relief Indebtedness Act (1934) and the Punjab Land Alienation Act (1900), which aimed to shield peasants from predatory moneylenders by controlling debt and forbidding the sale of land to non-agriculturists, were two of the agrarian reforms he helped pass. Chhotu Ram gained great respect from farmers despite not being an anti-colonialist in the nationalist sense because of his efforts to ameliorate the lot of Punjab's peasants (Kiran, 2010).

Renowned Arya Samaj leader and peasant activist Swami Keshavanda was instrumental in the mobilization of Hindu peasants, especially in the central and eastern districts of Punjab. A key player in the peasant movements against moneylenders and landowners was Keshavanda. He formed peasant organizations and assisted them in using collective action to stave off exploitation. His efforts were closely associated with the larger nationalist movement and the social reform agenda of the Arya Samaj, which aimed to improve the lot

of rural Hindus. His work was in line with bigger anti-colonial movements in Punjab and helped the Hindu peasantry become more politically aware (Talbot, 2011). Iqbal Ud-Din Qureshi, a well-known figure in the Kirti Kisan movement, was a socialist and communist leader who attempted to organize Punjab's industrial workers and peasants alike. Qureshi was instrumental in coordinating demonstrations against the feudal landlords, who ruled over large areas of land, and the British colonial authority. He took an active part in the Kirti Kisan Sabha, an organisation that brought together laborers and peasants from different religious backgrounds to demand land reforms and fight against exploitation. As a devoted Marxist, Qureshi's efforts supported the larger labor and agricultural movements in Punjab and promoted class-based solidarity among peasants. His impact continued into Pakistan's and India's early years of independence. Between the 1930s and the 1940s, these individuals were instrumental in bringing Punjab's peasantry together and resolving their political and economic issues. Their efforts, whether in the form of revolutionary movements, grassroots activity, or legislative reforms, influenced the course of peasant resistance to colonial control. Their work set the stage for the ongoing agrarian challenges that followed India's 1947 split (Chattha, et al, 2018).

Outcomes of peasants' revolts and resistance

One could perhaps be initially perplexed by the sheer quantity and diversity of these groups. However, these were merely the most well-known groups in a political environment that at any given moment was home to tens of radical organizations. Others, such as the Desh Bhagat Committee, served as middlemen in disputes between different groups. How therefore do we comprehend such organizations and their modes of operation given their extreme diversity? In terms of the KKS, it never quite succeeded in creating a unified party organization with a cadre-based membership that would be held to rigid party rules. Generally speaking, this was true for all groups, regardless of how radical they were. Instead, the KKS and its incarnations stayed a group of comparatively independent people who shared a specific radical history, just like other radical networks. As a result, the Sabha became clearly "Punjabi" in comparison to the larger All India Left (Singh, 2021).

Additionally, factors including political inclinations, financial stability, personal circumstances, and ideologies all had an impact on the makeup of these collectives. In fact, the current situation merely begs the question of whether these groups can be classified as "political parties" in the conventional sense at all. Of course, there were times when the majority of Punjabi radicals willingly submitted to party discipline, even at their own expense, especially in the 1940s.

A combination of wealthy landowners (zamindars), petty peasants, and renters made up Punjab's rural economy. Punjabi peasants frequently experienced financial difficulties as a result of excessive debt, onerous taxes, and unfair landlord tactics. The rural populace became deeply resentful as a result, and movements offering social and economic change found favor with them. Tenants working on expansive estates owned by landowners made up a sizable section of the Punjabi peasantry. The unfair terms of debt and tenancy infuriated the peasant class, which made them want for changes that would allay their financial complaints. Political mobilization and involvement with nascent nationalist movements, such as the Muslim League's call for Pakistan, were spurred by this anger. By planning demonstrations and gatherings in villages, the Muslim League attempted to enlist the support of Punjab's rural populace. Large numbers of peasants showed up to these events, giving the League a strong foundation of support in the rural areas. By the time of the 1946 elections, political control in Punjab had shifted from the Unionist Party to the Muslim League thanks in large part to this grassroots movement. The Muslim League won the support of a sizable percentage of the rural Muslim community, including peasants, and obtained an overwhelming majority of Muslim seats in Punjab during the crucial 1946 provincial elections. The extent to which Muslim peasants had accepted the League's demand for Pakistan and rejected the Unionist Party's more traditional stance on agricultural matters was evident in this election triumph. During the Direct-Action campaign of 1946, Muslim peasants, particularly those in rural Punjab, enthusiastically participated in reaction to the communal tensions and the demand for Pakistan. Many Muslim peasants viewed this as a chance to stand up for their rights and back Pakistan's founding. Their active desire for

political change was demonstrated by their participation in demonstrations, strikes, and occasionally violent acts against competing religious organizations or landlords. Punjab saw intense sectarian violence during India's 1947 Partition, with peasants frequently contributing to the growing hostilities between Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. Promises of land and money in a future Pakistan also drew Muslim peasants into the battle, even if a large portion of this violence was unintentional (Tirmizey, 2018).

Muslim peasants who had backed the independence movement anticipated land reforms and redistribution as part of the new government's plans following the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. Though these promises were not meaningfully fulfilled in the immediate post-Partition Pakistan, the need for agrarian reforms remained a major concern in rural Punjab and influenced political discourse in the new nation. The political activism of Punjabi peasants influenced the policies of Pakistan's succeeding administrations over time. The demands for land reforms, which were eventually adopted in the 1950s and 1970s, though with various degrees of success, were rooted in the peasant uprisings of the colonial era. Punjab peasants were instrumental in Pakistan's independence movement by defecting from the Unionist Party to the Muslim League and endorsing the latter's call for an independent Muslim state. Their engagement in the independence movement was motivated by their economic frustrations as well as the League's promises of land reforms and religious unity. Their involvement was essential in achieving Pakistan's existence and established the groundwork for eventual political and socioeconomic reforms in rural Pakistan, even though their immediate expectations of land redistribution were not fully achieved after Partition (Ali, 1991).

Peasants' consciousness and Colonial Mindset in the Punjab Province

In the 1930s and 1940s, a complex interaction of political mobilization, economic exploitation, and ideological shifts changed the relationship between peasants in the Punjab Province and the British colonial authorities. During this time, peasant consciousness developed as a result of exposure to political movements that aimed to address their complaints and deteriorating economic realities.

However, the colonial attitude was centered on preserving control over Punjab's agricultural economy, which was essential to British objectives, particularly in light of the area's importance as a hub for military and agricultural recruiting. The main factors contributing to the peasantry's increasing consciousness were the economic struggles they endured in Punjab, especially the consequences of high taxes, unfair land revenue schemes, and debt to moneylenders. In the end, the Land Alienation Act (1900), which was designed to shield farmers from non-farm moneylenders, was unable to stop peasants from falling into a vicious cycle of debt bondage and land loss. Due to their livelihoods being dependent on landlords, colonial officials, and volatile market prices, smallholders and renters experienced a great deal of animosity as a result of their economic vulnerability. Punjab's agrarian economy was severely impacted by the 1930s global economic slump, which also caused a large decline in the pricing of cash commodities like wheat and cotton. Peasants' economic situation continued to deteriorate as a result of their inability to pay taxes or settle debts (Tirmizey, 2018).

Punjab's peasant consciousness was influenced by religious and nationalist movements in addition to economic problems. For example, Sikh peasants were instrumental in the Gurdwara Reform Movement of the 1920s, which aimed to free Sikh religious institutions from the corrupt control of mahants (priests). This movement established the foundation for Sikh peasant engagement in subsequent nationalist struggles by fusing religious identification with anti-colonial feelings. Communist and socialist ideologies became popular among some peasants in the 1930s and 1940s, especially with the Kirti Kisan Sabha, which promoted land reforms and class warfare. Peasants were inspired by these movements to view their struggle in broader nationalistic contexts. Between the 1930s and 1940s, the Punjab Province's peasant consciousness was influenced by an increasing realization of their political and economic marginalization as a result of British colonial control. Peasants' engagement with nationalist, religious, and class-based movements—which offered them debt relief, equitable land ownership, and independence from colonial exploitation—led to the evolution of this consciousness. However, the major goal of the

colonial mindset was to keep Punjab's military and agricultural resources under control by coopting the landed aristocracy, stifling dissent, and engaging in economic exploitation. The conflict that ensued between the ambitions of the peasantry and the interests of the colonizers was a major factor in influencing the Punjabi independence movement (Gill, 2024).

Conclusion

A key component of the larger anti-colonial movement, peasant resistance in colonial Punjab during the 1930s and 1940s was influenced by the intricate interactions between political mobilization, economic exploitation, and the changing awareness of the rural populace. During this time, the Congress, the Unionist Party, socialist and communist groups, as well as economic hardship and exploitative colonial policies all contributed to the growing politicization of peasants. Peasants increasingly turned to organized resistance as the British colonial government used punitive taxation, debt, and feudal systems to try and maintain control over Punjab's lucrative agricultural economy. Peasant discontent was mostly caused by the economic exploitation of the rural population, especially the debilitating consequences of debt, excessive land taxes, and declining agricultural prices. The demands of World War II and the global economic slump, which imposed further hardships on the rural people, exacerbated these grievances. Punjabi peasants, however, were not just helpless victims; they actively opposed colonial rule, taking part in campaigns for land reform, debt relief, and independence. They attempted to overthrow both the established feudal system that exploited them and British rule through demonstrations, mass mobilizations, and involvement in wider nationalist organizations like as the Quit India Movement. Simultaneously, the colonial government implemented a divide-and-rule policy in order to secure Punjabi agricultural output and military recruitment. Large-scale peasant uprisings were put down by the British by taking advantage of religious and communal divisions and favoring the landed class. Despite these initiatives, a relentless push for change was created by the growing consciousness of peasants, which was encouraged by nationalist and socialist ideals. Wide-ranging effects resulted from Punjab's

colonial peasant resistance movement. It was crucial to the broader struggle for independence because it helped to organize rural populations politically and set the stage for agrarian reforms in Pakistan and post-colonial India. After independence, Punjab's political landscape was still shaped by calls for debt relief, land redistribution, and the elimination of feudal systems.

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