

Peasants' Movement and Role of Bhartiya Kisan Union

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Abstract

Karl Marx did not assign any revolutionary role to the peasant's. Whereas Lenin did assign some revolutionary role to the peasants but Mao Tse Tung fully exploited potential of the peasantry in Chinese revolution. Eric R. Wolf studied the peasants' wars in Mexico, Russia and China and concluded that though peasants are especially handicapped in passing from passive recognition of wrong to political action, as a means of setting those right, occasions when they rose in revolt and brought about revolutionary changes are not few.

Donald S. Sagoria's study of peasant's movement in Asia concludes that factors such as high productivity and high land values, labour intensive crops, cheapness of labour and heavy population pressure on land provided favourable objective condition for the mobilization of the peasantry.

D. Durghia presented a brief history of peasant's movements in Indian states he noted the peculiar features of peasant movement in Andhra Pradesh are that these movements are regional oriented and sometimes also on local agricultural problems. There is a lack of unity among the farmers.

Prominent peasant leader Sharad Joshi presented a clear picture of biased attitude of the Indian government towards peasants. He tried to make a distinction between urban and rural India into India and Bharat. He described that India exploited Bharat.

M.V. Nandkarni presented the peasants movement in different states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka etc. He believed that the farmer's movement under non-party organizations has only increased the power of rich farmers.

Sucha Singh Gill commented these developments have fragmented BKU's movements in the state. The splits and divisions have weakened the movement with a larger number of farmers becoming dis-interested in BKU due to the opposing positions taken by the different factions leading to confusion among the many supporters of the movement.

Though BKU (Sidhupur) has lost its traditional strength due to two splits yet it has been struggling to form a mass movement and forging unity among all the peasant organizations of the Punjab. BKU (Ugrahan) is going through a critical phase, after waging revolt like situations, announcing the Karja Mukti Andolan (agitation) and direct clashes with police and administration during agitations. Successes of Chathewal agitation establish its creditability that it can organize a big peasant's movement in the Punjab.

KEYWORDS: Peasant movement, Bhartiya Kisan Union, Laxmi, rebellion, naxalite, Punjab Khetibari Zimidara Union

Introduction: Peasants' Movements in form of revolution or rebellion to achieve their interest or the fulfilment of their genuine and just demands is an area of keen interest amongst the social scientists particularly in a prevalent regime of LPG when thousands of peasants are committing suicides and no such movement or revolt or rebellion took place in India. The present research paper not only deals with capabilities of peasants to become a revolutionary class but their capacities to wage agitations like revolts or rebellions in the world, developing countries, Asian countries, India and Punjab. The organisation known as Bhartiya Kisan Union emerged as a strong peasants' organisation in India and especially in Punjab emerged as a

pressure group as well as waging revolt like agitations where they successfully not only 'Governor's House gherao' but non-execution of court's verdicts of 'kurkies' (open auction of land).

Some studies related to peasant organizations and movements in the context of pressure groups are also available. Prominent peasant leader Sharad Joshi's book "Bharat Speak Out" presented a clear picture of biased attitude of the Indian government towards peasants. He tried to make a distinction between urban and rural India into India and Bharat. He described that India exploited Bharat. He argued, "the Western-oriented rulers in Delhi have deliberately kept the farmer hovering around the poverty line, so that they could develop industry with the low cost material. He further argued that no political party could seriously be interested in farmers getting remunerative price. These parties are part of the system which has been deliberately exploiting farmers. Lyod I and Sussane Rudolph's book "In Pursuit of Lakshmi" concludes that class mobilization has not taken place in the countryside. The nature of the conflict according to them is country side verses city.

M.V. Nand Karni's book "Farmers Movement in India" presented the peasants movement in different states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnatka etc. He believed that the farmer's movement under non-party organizations has only increased the power of rich farmers. Though, he assigned very few pages to Punjab peasant's movement, yet he successfully theoretically assessed the pressure group under our study viz. BKU. He argued that agitation organized by BKU took place not because farmers were poor or had not gained in absolute terms they might have even gained in relative term compared with agricultural labourer-but because they did not gain relatively to non-agricultural income which they could observe closely."

D. Durghia¹ in his book, "Farmers Movement in India" Presented a brief history of peasant's movements in Indian states and a detailed study of peasant's movement in Andhra Pradesh in the post-green revolution era. He noted the peculiar features of peasant movement in Andhra Pradesh are that these movements are regional oriented and sometimes also on local agricultural problems. There is a lack of unity among the farmers. Most of the farmers are divided on the basis of political ideologies. There is no farmer leader who is having the capacity to organize the movements above party politics and regional barriers." This peculiar situation prevailing in Andhra Pradesh resulted into the mass suicides of the farmers.

Kehar Singh's² book, "Farmers movements and Pressure Group Politics" an empirical study of Punjab Khetibari Zimidara Union which was later on transformed into BKU. He studied the phenomena in the context of Pressure groups only rather than as a peasant movement too. BKU came in being in 1980 and his empirical work was completed in 1981. He argued that the BKU has at time played an important role in the dynamic of Punjab politics. No political party can ignore the union anymore."

Some works are also available on students unions, community and caste interest, ethnic and ideological groups in Indian politics. The study of agrarian struggles in India has not received the attention of Political Scientist. The available literature we have concerns peasant movements and revolts. Kathleen Gouch, a sociologist, was the first to give an overall scenario of peasant uprisings in India, in an article written in 1974. On the same lines, Sunil Sen., a historian, made an effort to have a look of the peasant movements of mid nineteenth and twentieth century's. A.R.Desai's two books "Peasants Struggles in India." (1979 and 1986) one dealing with pre-independence another with post-independence period is important contribution in the field of peasant studies. D.N. Dhanagare in his "Peasant Movements in India, 1983" analyses the peasant movements and revolts in period between 1920 and 1950. He has tried his level best to nullify the Karl Marx's notion about peasants as rural idiots or non-revolutionary. In the literature on peasant movement's number of studies are available on

certain movements like Indigo movement in Bengal and Bihar, the Mophal rebellion in Malabar (Kerala), Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the Telangana movement in Andhra Pradesh, the Naxalite movement in West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab.

A number of detailed case studies on different peasants' struggles in pre and post-independence period in different parts of the country are now available. Historical analysis of peasants struggle from different perspectives is offered by Kaviraj and Sunil Sen on West Bengal, Arvind Das and Hamnham on Bihar, N.G. Ranga on Andhara and Nambodripad on Kerala. Paul Brass and Majid Hayat Siddiqui studied the peasant's struggles in Uttar Pradesh. Other peasants struggles were studied as a case study in Rajasathan by Ram Pande in Gujrat by David Hardiman and Ghaanshyam Shah, in Maharashtra by G.Parulker and Gail Omvedt, in Orrisa by Binod Das, in Punjab by Barrier and S. Gill, Master Hari Singh on Kisan Sabha's and Paramjit Judge on Naxalite Movement. On the whole a comparative approach to regional struggle is missing though the study by Dhanagare is at good beginning. Available literature indicates that the peasant struggles have been widespread in both the post and pre-independence period. The intensity and nature of struggle vary and certain areas appear to have a strong tradition of peasant movements

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Eric R. Wolf³ studied the peasants' wars in Mexico, Russia and China and concluded that though peasants are especially handicapped in passing from passive recognition of wrong to political action, as a means of setting those right, occasions when they rose in revolt and brought about revolutionary changes are not few. The main cause of reward was the penetration of modern capitalism in peasant communities. James C. Scott's study of peasant's upheavals in Burma and Indo-China supports the finding of wolf. Barrington Moore, Jr.⁴, on the other hand observed that the most important causes of peasant revolutions have been the absence of commercial revolution in agriculture led by the landed upper classes and the concomitant survival of institutions into the modern era." Jeffrey M. Page's observation about the peasant movement is based on his study of different cropping patterns and its effect on relationship between cultivators and non-cultivators land owners. He argued that the areas where certain crops limit income to land and labour rather than to capital create a potential for the development of peasant revolt and revolution."

Donald S. Sagoria's study of peasant's movement in Asia concludes that factors such as high productivity and high land values, labour intensive crops, cheapness of labour and heavy population pressure on land provided favourable objective condition for the mobilization of the peasantry. But such objective situation will not automatically result in a peasant upheaval unless it is worked up by a revolutionary ideology and consciousness.

K.C. Alexander⁵ has very ably analysed these points of view into following propositions about the causes of peasant movements; (a) peasant's movement are caused by the deteriorating economic condition of peasantry. The commercialization of agriculture leads to a break down in traditional peasant landlord relations, while an agricultural pattern that does not permit the use of capital to increase production cannot meet the competing demands of both cultivators and non-cultivators. (b) there must be some scope for mobilization, provided by the continuance of traditional soldiery organization or by a geographical concentration of the rural proletariat (c) a change in normative orientation is required in order that the peasantry perceives the traditional institutions and relations as illegitimate.

Peasant movements are generally classified on the basis of period into pre-British, British period and post-independence period. The post-independence period is classified into pre-Naxalbari and post Naxalbari or pre and post green revolution period. Post green revolution

period is further divided into pre and post Emergency. It may be further divided into pre and post W.T.O. regime.

Kathleen Gouch⁶ classifies peasant revolts on the basis of their goals, ideology and methods of organizations. According to her, there were five types

of peasant revolts such as (1) restorative rebellions to drive out the British and restore earlier rulers and social relations; (2) religious movements for the liberation of a region of an ethnic group under a new form of governments; (3) social banditry; (4) terrorist vengeance with the idea of meting out collective justice; (5) mass insurrections for the redress of particular grievances.

This classification is mainly based on the goals of the revolt and class base and strategies of peasants are ignored. Ranjit Guha adopts a different method of looking at peasant movement. He examines peasant insurgency from the perspective of peasant consciousness of peasant's for revolt. He describes the underlying structural features of tribal consciousness of peasant's viz. negation, solidarity, transmission, territoriality etc. This can help us to understand ably and how the peasant rebel.

Another important aspect of peasant rebel is on what issues they revolt. It is argued by many scholars that the peasants revolts against exploitation and oppression when their economic condition deteriorated. These issues may be classified into three heads such as : (1) deterioration of their economic condition ; (2) structural changes , which cause on increase in the exploitation of peasants, consequently deteriorating their conditions; (3) rising aspirations of peasants to improve their condition.

There is an urge to go in search of a prominent cause of issue of a social and political peasant struggles. It is difficult for a researcher to find out why similar causes and conditions at other places or at other times did not lead to political mobilization of peasants. This shows us the complexities of the social processes.

In a social or political movement of peasants it is pertinent to note that which peasants participate in the movement and which class of peasants has the greatest potential to bring about revolutionary or radical changes. Scholars, do not follow class analysis and believes that peasants a homogeneous class. They consider that economic differentiations among the peasants are irrelevant. The scholars who were active in the nationalist movements treated peasants as one class of people irrespective of the land ownership.

Marxist Scholars classify the peasant's in different classes or strata. Daniel Thorner divides the post-independence Indian peasantry into three classes' viz. (1) Malik; (2) Kisan; (3) Mazdoor. Lloyd and Sussane Rudolph⁷ divide rural population into four agrarian economic classes; (1) agricultural labourers; (2) small land holders; (3) bullock capitalists (middle class); (4) large land holders. Unlike Marxist, they do not assume that necessary antagonisms or principal contradiction exist among these classes. Most of their categories are similar to what other scholars have used except the category of middle peasants.

The category of middle class peasants has generated a lot of debate among the scholars. Hamza Alvi⁸ argues the middle peasants who are economically somewhat more independent have greater potential than other peasant classes to play a revolutionary role. Because middle peasants are neither exploiter not exploited. He argues that the poor peasants are initially the least militant class because of their dependence on rich peasants. To Hamza Alvi, "in revolutionary situations, when anti-lord and anti rich peasant's sentiments is built up by, say the militancy of middle peasants, his morale is raised and he is more ready to respond to calls to action". The middle peasants, on the other hand, are initially the most, militant element of the peasantry, and they can be a powerful of the proletarian movements in the countryside, especially in generating the initial impetus of the peasant revolution. Robin Jeffery suggests that it is the middle peasants who are most likely initially to become active participants in such

a movement, though poor peasants may be involved later in villages where the movement acquires a firm hold.

D.N. Dhanagre⁹ argues "the structural independence of the middle peasant has been over emphasized by Alvi and Wolf and they have overstated the political mobility and strategic position of the middle peasants in the agrarian class structure". He further argues that in terms of class solidarity, the middle peasants are weaker than other agrarian classes. Their interests in the field of agriculture are more heterogeneous than those of rich and poor peasants.

Arvind Das¹⁰ argues that there was no significant difference between the middle peasantry and rich peasantry in India. He asserts, "to speak of the middle peasantry as the revolutionary vanguard when one really means the rich peasantry is to euphemistically give respectability to an otherwise incomplete and even exploitative traditional phase of agrarian struggle".

But Hamza Alvi has tried to examine his middle peasant's thesis at the empirical level. To him Tebhaga movement was initially a movement of middle peasants. Share-croppers were drawn into it at a later stage. He supports his contention by establishing a fact that the leading members of Tebhaga committees were middle peasants. Other makes almost the same observations regarding the Telengana movement, in which the demands were broadly based in the initial stage and which drew in the middle peasants as well as the poor peasants. He further argues that the causes of its failure were that it lost the support of middle peasant.

Dhanagre, Kathleen Gough, Kapil Kumar, Arvind Das etc. argue that poor peasant and agricultural labourer as having the potential for organizing revolutionary movements in India. Robot Hardgrove shows in the study of Moplah rebellion that poorest tenant cultivators of Kerala were more militant than the rich peasants.

Ernesto Laclau¹¹ studies, social movement in Latin America, in a different ways than the traditional Marxist class based analysis. He designates by its appeal to the people above class division. Population constitutes the form of political expression of popular sectors when they are unable to establish an autonomous organization and class ideology. Ernesto Loclau specifies four conditions of populism such as:-

- (I) Ingrained hostility to status quo
- (II) Appeal to the people not classes
- (III) Mistrust of traditional politicians
- (IV) Anti intellectualism

A number of peasant's movements in the pre-independence period were multi-class in nature. So it is clear that it is difficult to arrive at a theory regarding the 'revolutionary' role of a particular agrarian class. But the numbers of peasant's movements we have discussed were dominated by middle class peasants.

Another important aspect of movement is that who lead the movement. Because, leaders are responsible for translating objective causes into subjective consciousness and mobilising peasants. Some scholars feel that peasants themselves cannot lead only revolutionary movement. Shanin Kapil Kumar argues that peasant struggle can never assume a genuinely political character unless they are taken over by leaders belonging to social layers politically more advanced than the peasants themselves. No purposeful study could be conducted unless it examines the nature, caste and class background, socialization of the peasant leaders. In a social or political movement was led by whom? Whether they belong to particular religion, region etc. what strategies were adopted in the movement. What was the ideological basis of the movement? What type of leadership originated and organized the movement. What were the objectives taken into consideration? What were the reasons in mind of leadership? The leadership is considered to be an important factor in organizing the movement and for their foresighted decisions. The other important question to analyze weather we can consider a movement a mass movement? Because in social sciences no unanimous criteria has been

developed so far to define a mass movement. The region, nature, intensity, vision, class and caste character of the movement are to be studied.

Peasant Movement in Punjab

Historically the peasant's movement develops as a part of the national independent struggle. The peasants besides participating in the national liberation struggle, launched by Indian National Congress, contributed to the freedom struggle through movements in social and religious garb such as Kooka movements, Gurudwara Freedom movement, Babbar Akali movement, Gadhar movement etc. The first organized struggle was directed against land Alienation Act 1901 and was organized by the Kirti Kisan Sabha in 1900-07.

The struggle of the Punjab peasants against the government on economic issues was launched under the leadership of S. Ajit Singh, an uncle of Shaheed Bhagat Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai and raised the slogan of Paggri Sambal Jatta in 1907, they successfully, mobilised the Punjab peasantry against the reactionary colonial bill. The bill is sought to curtail the proprietary rights of peasants in the newly annexed land of Punjab. The bill restricted the rights of these peasants to make wills and denied them the right to cut trees on their land.

In 1924, Punjab peasant successfully fought agitation against increase in the water rates. During the 1930 the Kissan Sabha (Kisan wing of C. P.I.) mobilized the Punjab peasants on the issue of land revenue, water rates and bureaucratic oppression. Many freedom fighters found it useful to work among peasants and mobilized them on their problems and integrate and peasants struggle with national independence.

Peasant movement were launched in Punjab in 1936, against the land settlement cess, canal irrigation rates, chowkidara tax and police atrocities while the leadership still remain in the hands of Kirti Kisan Sabha. The Charik agitation was started in early 1938 in Ferozepur district where the cattle market had been closed down, the land tax was four times that in British territories and social amenities were not provided adequately. The tenants struggle in Nilibar in 1937 was directed against the auction of land on tender notices, which favoured big landlords and tenants were being exploited. The demand to abolish "Biswedari" was raised in an organized manner in Patiala and other area since 1937-38.

Another attempt was made at political level to organize a political party of the agriculturalist in the form of Unionist party in 1923 under the leadership of Sir Chhotu Ram and Fazal Hussain. This party, as the ruling party, dominated the Punjab Politics from 1923-1947. Master Hari Singh observes, "In pre-partition peasant were activated by unionist party led by the landlords". In princely state the Praja Mandal movement played that role. Zamindara league of Sh. Chhotu Ram mobilized the peasantry and created awareness of usefulness of its collective strength.

In the post-independence period an important peasant struggle was fought under the banner of Red Communist Party (A faction separated from C.P.I.) under the leadership of Teja Singh Sawatantar in P.E.P.S.U. The P.E.P.S.U. movement is called as majara (tenant) movement. This movement was spread into P.E.P.S.U; across during the period of 1948-1952. This peasant movement with passage of time converted itself into peasant armed rebellion. Tenants forcefully captured the land from feudal lord and distributed among tenants.

In the end of fifties, a strong peasant's agitation was fought against Betterment Levi Tax. The leadership of this movement was also in the hands of C.P.I. this agitation was fought against the policy of Punjab government to impose direct Betterment Levi Tax on peasants. In all most every village, peasants successfully organized assemblies and processions. Punjab government tried its best to curb the movement with police repression. The police restored lathi charge and firing at many places but the unique feature of this movement was that people did not fled from the scene and face police repression with great zeal.

In the end of sixties, a strong naxalitie movement was beginning in naxalbari area of west Bengal. Soon naxalitie movement spread to the other states in India including Punjab. The

naxalite movement in Punjab was in tune with what was happening in other parts of the country. In Punjab the naxalities organized peasants struggle with main three objectives, viz

- (i) Seizure of land of land lords
- (ii) Demand for an increase in wages of agriculture workers
- (iii) Forcible harvesting of crops

This movement was in the hands of the leadership of newly created party C.P.I (ML) the Naxalities introduced the line of annihilation of class enemies in Punjab. In the terms of social background of the persons annihilated in the movement may be divided into three phases:

(1) The major targets were big land lords who were identified as class enemies by the Naxalities.

(2) Naxalite, attacked police informers who were instrumental in the arrest of their comrades.

(3) To kill the police personal and their relatives in retaliation who ruthlessly killed naxalities.

In the initial phase two mass struggles were fought one in Bhikhi-Samaon and second, in Birla Farm near Ropar. In the annihilation phase Parmjit Judge noted 73 persons were attacked by Naxalities for killing them out of which 14 escaped death. Among those who became targets 28 were big landlords, factory owners or big politicians, twelve were money lenders, 23 were police agents and 10 were and government officials or their relatives. Major districts of Naxalities attacks were Jalandhar, Kapurthla and Sangrur.

In the post-annihilation phase, the movement was fragmented into various fractions, which took contradictory positions with regards to the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary struggle. A majority of the factions moved towards agitational approach. An important agitation was fought at Kala Sanghian (Distt.Kapurthala). In this village, the S.N.Sinha group organized a peasant organization known as Kirti Kisan Sabha. This organization spread very soon in the adjoining villages. The mobilization of Kirti Kisan Sabha was against big landlords. The big landlords perceived it to be a threat to their power and dominance and they looked for an opportunity to teach a lesson to Sabha leaders. On January 26, 1973 a black day was celebrated by Sabha in which thousands peasants participated. The situation became volatile the police came to the village. The clash between the sabha members and the police led to the death of two Naxalities in September 1973. Kala Sanghian was known as Mini Naxalbari.

Causes of BKU Emergence and Its Splits

Punjab is an agricultural state. The green revolution which ushered in mid-sixties has brought about far reaching changes in the agriculture and rural areas of Punjab. The green revolution has enabled Punjab, once a deficit state in food grains to become a major surplus state. Punjab, a small state in terms of area having 1.5 percent of Indian Territory, producing sixty percent of food grains of India. The causes of the emergence of Punjab Khetibari Zimidar Union hereafter PKZU were the introduction of new technology in the green revolution proves partly the Arthur Bentley's proliferation hypothesis about the origin of groups that technical innovations cause the social differentiations.

The material gains of green revolution remained for a short period. Since 1972, there was a decline in profitability of agriculture. The material gains (of) during green revolution provided enough consciousness among the peasants that they could not tolerate declines in profitability and organised themselves into PK ZU. Here David Truman's homeostatic mechanism hypothesis proves true that the disadvantaged sections of society seek to restore the viable balance. He argues that the disadvantaged people with differentiated interest and values organize themselves to work towards a favourable balance in society. The finding of Hardip Singh¹² proves true that the period of early seventies was also marked by the process of disintegration of the path of armed struggle by the Naxalite movement and consequently a shift towards a political line oriented towards forming of mass based organizations. As a result of this shift from annihilation line to the mass activity line, the major chunk of Naxalite cadre got

engaged in building mass organization within the peasantry. This development generated fears among a section of the politically conscious rich peasant in Punjab.

It also proves K.C. Alexander's thesis that the emergence of the most of the independent farmer's pressure groups in a South India can be explained as a reaction to the political organizations of some section of the peasants and agricultural labourers. The green revolution has increased the integration of agriculture into market nexus. The green revolution, which contributed materially to all categories of peasant, including small farmers, in proportion to their land and other assets owned by them but the material gains of green revolution, particularly for small farmers, did not remain favourable for a long period. The uneven gains of green revolution have widened the disparities among all segments of the peasants.

In the modernization of agriculture in Punjab has intended to undermine the traditional norms of agrarian relationship in which based on exchange of mutual benefits and services. It has created an economically powerful and socially influential section of farmers who are keen to nurse their own vested interests and to perpetuate the arrangements which helped them to become rich. It has accentuated the class contradiction between the farmers and the landless labourers, and farmers are keen to keep the latter under control. The initial phase of green revolution became a paying proposition with high rate of return over cost. The terms of trade were favourable till 1972-73. After wards there was decline in terms of trade. Peasants met another setback when Government of India announced the application of the Land Ceiling Act of 1972.

Green revolution brought prosperity and higher rate of literacy for a segment of peasantry which contributed to the rise of the level of consciousness among the peasants and they organize themselves into PKZU in 1972.

BKU came into being due to the deteriorating conditions of the peasants. It proves one of the theses of K.C. Alexander about the causes of peasant movement. He argues that peasant movement is caused by the deteriorating economic condition of the peasantry. The commercialisation of agriculture leads to a breakdown of agrarian relations.

Since its inception BKU successfully fought various agitations and succeeded to mobilize the peasantry on massive scale. It has fought two historic agitations like Governors Gherao in March 1984, and Kanak-bandh, Gaon-bandh, Karja-bandh in the same year.

Since the late 1970s, there occurred agitations by farmers mainly on price and related issues and against the neglect of rural interest it has been a prominent feature of the political scene in several states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab etc. The peasants have launched massive agitations in various states demanding remunerative prices of agricultural products, reduction in the rates of agricultural inputs (Electricity, Seeds, Oil, Fertilizers, Insecticides, Pesticides and Weedicides etc.

Farmer's Movement spread in various parts of the country. They may be said to have started in Tamil Nadu under the leadership of Narayana Swami Naidu. In Maharashtra, farmers launched an agitation on massive scale under the leadership of the non-political Shet Kari Sangathna headed by Sharad Joshi. The peasants were mobilised on massive scale by Rudrappa in Karnataka by Petal in Gujarat, by Mohinder Singh Takait in U.P., Vijay Jawadia in Maharashtra by Shanker Reddy in Rayala Seema, Andhra Pradesh.

The leadership of independent peasant's organizations learnt out of experience the limitation of state level peasant organization and realized the need for an organization at national level.

Since, it was the central government which determined the prices of major agricultural inputs and out puts. Only a strong national peasant organization could prove effective. Narayana Swami Naidu took the initiative and convened a meeting of the non-political organization and formed Indian Farmers Union (Bhartya Kisan Union). Punjab Khetibari Zimidara Union merged itself in to BKU and became its Punjab Unit in 1980.

It was decided that BKU will remain non-political in character. But the late Narayana Swami Naidu himself could not resist temptation of jumping into the political fray of Tamilnadu. He formed a political party under the name of 'Peasant Toilers Party. This brought a split in the national level organization. The Northern Units of BKU removed Mr. Naidu from the President ship. In 1982 once again peasant leaders came together and formed an inter-state co-ordination committee. In 1988 a further split came into being Mohinder Singh Takait from U.P. formed a different faction and BKU was divide into two factions at national level one led by Sharad Joshi and other by Mohinder Singh Takait. Sharad Joshi unsuccessfully contested the Maharashtra Assembly elections. Mohinder Singh Takait converted its peasants union into Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party hereafter BKKP in Uttar Pradesh. BKKP contested the 1996 assembly election in U.P. and bagged eight seats. Earlier Bhupinder Singh Mann successfully made his entry to Rajya Sabha.

The organization of pressure groups in India largely the function of politically motivated persons, such groups are organised by Politicians with a view to creating a permanent support base ensuring their continued ascend only in their respective political party or by the out of tune politicians to seek re-entry into the polities. The group may also be organized by some persons in their effort to seek recognition in the political circles. This hypothesis about pressure groups and its organization proves true in the findings of Kehar Singh¹³ about the study of Punjab Khetibari Zimidara Union. He observes that most of the agricultural groups in Punjab were organized by those who had the back ground of either the erstwhile Unionist Party or of the Akali Dal, and were at the movement endearing to seek entry into a political party of their preference.

Causes of Splits

First split in BKU came into being in September, 1989. The tussle for to the post in the organization brings forth the first split, whereas both the leaders alleged each other for the split. Lakhawal alleged the split was caused due to some ideological differences. He accused B.S. Mann and B.S. Rajewal as collaborated with the government for agro processing units and allotment of agencies for agricultural inputs. On the other hand Mann and Rajewal accused Lakhawal for the split that he was too ambitious to become the president of the organization though of a faction and his lust of power caused split in the organization. One thing proved that the lack of democracy in the political parties and institution and respect of democratic tendencies in the working of democratic institutions are prevailing.

The reason of second split in Lakhawal faction in September 1994 was caused due to the Lakhawal's active role in Sikh politics which deprived the organization's character of an independent non party organizations and more emphasis on religious demands of Sikhs than the economic demands of peasants. When objected by the secular activists who resulted into the expulsion of certain leaders which proved Robert Michel's thesis of iron law of oligarchy.

The third split of June 2002, in BKU Ekta (Sidhupur) over the agitation means in Jethuke agitation. The state leadership wanted to adopt a soft line on merger bus rare issue whereas district leadership and some hard liner wished to adopt repressive imitational means. The tussle resulted into the expulsion of hard liner which further proved the Robert Michels hypothesis.

The expelled leaders alleged that president Sidhupur, who criticized the Lakhawal being play an active role in Sikh politics, also participating in Akali politics accordingly to the wishes of SGPC president Tohra.

The fourth split of October 2004 in BKU Ekta Sidhupur was caused by the tussle over leadership and lack of faith in democratic norms. The aspirants of top post Surjit Singh Phool violated the democratic norms and presented a parallel report in an annual delegation session at Fatehgarh Sahib. Whereas the report was passed in Executive Committee unanimously to which Phool was also a member.

Sucha Singh Gill¹⁴ comments on these developments. These developments have fragmented BKU's movements in the state. The splits and divisions have weakened the movement with a larger number of farmers becoming dis-interested in BKU due to the opposing positions taken by the different factions leading to confusion among the many supporters of the movement.

BKU which came into being an independent, autonomous and non party organisation has left its character in 1980 when not only it supported the Lok Dal in legislative elections but also some of its leaders contested the elections on Lok Dal tickets. Though it supported the SAD in legislative assembly elections of 1985 yet with the formation of S.S. Barnala as Chief Minister and his stand on the realignment of SYL it remained more close to P.S. Badal. During the phase of militancy in Punjab, BKU could not save itself from prevailing fundamentalist Sikh movement. It supported United Akali Dal and discarded the moderate SAD in parliamentary election 1989.

After the first split of September 1989 both the factions supported poll boycott move of SAD in the legislative elections of 1992. With the passage of time Chief Minister Late S. Beant Singh succeeded to win over to Lakhawal. In the Parliamentary election of 1996 both the factions lefts its independent character, BKU (L) converted itself into Lok Hit Party and BKU (Rajewal) with the collaboration of SAD (Mann) and Janta Party of Subramaniam Swami unsuccessfully contested the elections. Till then union was further bifurcated into three factions.

In the state legislative elections of 2002 both the groups BKU (L) and BKU (Rajewal) took diverse stands and former supported the SAD where as latter for the first time supported the Congress party. Due to the support of BKU (Rajewal) congress came victorious. In the parliamentary elections of 2004 both the groups took their earlier stands and BKU (Lakhawal) supported SAD where as BKU (Rajewal) supported congress. Then BKU (Lakhawal) has been supporting SAD in SGPC Elections and in lieu of that getting SGPC tickets and nominations from SAD. The third factions BKU (Sidhupur) are also being alleged to indulge into factional fights of SAD and supporting Late Gurcharn Singh Tohra. The only faction BKU (Ugrahan) could preserve its independent character. Though it did not support any political party yet the leaders and members of this group are alienating from electoral process of Punjab.

BKU (Lakhawal) has fully intermingle itself in SAD politics with shared mass base of peasantry. BKU (Rajewal) is heading towards to formation of political party at national level. Though BKU (Sidhupur) has lost its traditional strength due to two splits yet it has been struggling to form a mass movement and forging unity among all the peasant organizations of the Punjab. BKU (Ugrahan) is going through a critical phase, after waging revolt like situations, announcing the Karja Mukti Andolan (agitation) and direct clashes with police and administration during agitations. Successes of Chathewal agitation establish its creditability that it can organize a big peasant's movement in the Punjab.

Foot notes:

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