

Contemporary Farmers' Protests and legacy of the 1980's: Changes in Ideology, Class Coalitions, and Impact of Globalization

Virginia Van Dyke
University of Washington

Protesting farmers, ensconced on the borders of Delhi, comprise the largest farmers' agitation since the early 1980s; the latter which took place interwoven with the Sikh nationalist movement. While both farmers' movements were responding to the growth of neo-liberalism and globalization, they differ in terms of class alliances, ideology of their leaders, and nature of their engagement with the political party system. Previously, the BKU represented the middle to larger farmers in protecting the gains of the Green Revolution and was attuned to the political party which replicated its social base. The existence of multiple BKU factions and a proliferation of other unions and organizations within the contemporary protests opens up space for cross-class, cross-caste and cross-gender struggles of smaller farmers and laborers against a threat to their very livelihood.

Beginning on the 12th of March 1984, just a few months before the Indian Army's military incursion into the Darbar Sahib complex with the intention of eliminating the militants, between 30,000 and 40,000 disaffected farmers *gheraoed* the Punjab Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh for a week. This event provided a dramatic finish to a '14-month-long peaceful agitation' occurring at the height of militancy in the state.¹ Organized by the *Bharatiya Kisan Union* (BKU), before it splintered into its current fractured state, it was held in conjunction with Sharad Joshi of the *Shetkari Sangatana*, a farmers' organization based in Maharashtra, and supported by the Kisan Wing of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), as well as by the Kirti Kisan Union (CPI-ML) and the Kisan Sabhas of the other communist parties.² Motivated by the slowing of the gains of the Green Revolution (hereafter GR), the farmers demanded that the government keep input costs low (specifically electricity prices for tube wells) and determine procurement prices for grain which took into account actual costs incurred by farmers.

Like the contemporary farmers' protests, it was characterized by peaceful crowds and *langars*. One resident of Chandigarh was quoted in *India Today*, 'With Punjab's violence as backdrop, one expected that they would set the city on fire. But one could envy their informal manners and friendly nature. We shall certainly miss them.'³

Several months later, on May 23, 1984, the then Shiromani Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal, building on a BKU campaign demanding higher procurement prices for crops, announced the stoppage of grains moving

out of Punjab along with encouraging farmers to stop repayments of loans to the government.⁴ The attack on the Darbar Sahib complex came 13 days after the announcement. P.C. Alexander, then Principle Secretary in charge of the Prime Minister's Office and close advisor to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, writes in his memoir that this 'invitation to anarchy' in the context of on-going violence in the state 'was the proverbial last straw' and prompted Indira Gandhi's decision to send the army into Punjab.⁵ The BKU also believed that it was the destabilizing agitation and 'the farmers' strength,' seen as a threat to the state that was the real target, not Bhindranwale and his supporters.⁶ Farmer activist Krishna Gandhi concurs in his piece on the farmers' movement that, '...it was the economic threat of the peasant movement rather than the sporadic terrorism of the extremists that prompted the Centre's action.'⁷ Thousands of farmers were arrested after Operation Bluestar and the army crackdown on the state put an end to farmer's agitations in Punjab for some time.

At the zenith, then, of the militant movement in the state, the very prominent factor of the farmers' movement, which was intertwined with protests such as the Dharam Yudh Morcha led by the Shiromani Akali Dal and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, often gets overshadowed in the eyes of public memory and analysts by militancy, religious nationalism/revivalism and political maneuverings. According to Gill, 'Punjab experienced two parallel but mutually supporting movements. One was led by the Bharatiya Kisan Union during 1983-1984. The spread of this agitation was so large that it paralyzed completely state administration in the rural areas...'⁸ As the anti-Centre Sikh nationalist agitation grew against the Congress Party led by Indira Gandhi and her policies of centralizing power and attempting to undermine the SAD, it was supported by the sympathetic farmers' movement, whose demands were also pitted against Central government policies.

While the Akalis supported the farmers' protests, the BKU 'regularly sent its [sic] Jathas to court arrest' in the Dharam Yudh Protests⁹ and gave moral support to the Bhindranwale/Akali side of the conflict with the Nirankaris,¹⁰ a history of mutual support that the current government draws upon in painting protestors as 'Khalistanis.'¹¹ Fear of the militant movement forging even closer links with the farmers' movement at that time was expressed in a piece by Pritam Singh in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, warning of an 'ominous development', that 'leaders of the BKU recently had a long meeting with Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale,' the union of which could 'become a powerful force'.¹²

This is not to say that there has not been substantial academic interest paid to the economic, social and political changes that were precipitated by the Green Revolution in North India and the importance of these factors in explaining political unrest in Punjab. There also has been much acknowledgment of the difficulty of teasing out multiple issues from religious revivalism to a consolidation of a newly differentiated class stemming from rising educational levels and increased prosperity.¹³ However, the story of the impact of the farmers' movement on the overall level of massive anti-Centre agitations in the state, along with the reading of those protests by the Central government, may

have been under told. While, by comparison, the current farmers' protests, aided by social media, poets and singers, and small publications on the protest site such as *Trolley Times*, are constantly in focus in India and often in the international press, as well.¹⁴ Two Punjab farmers' sons winning Olympic medals in Tokyo during the protests only added to the sense that the focus on these issues is ubiquitous.

This essay will compare the farmers' movements in Punjab in the mid-1980s with the current farmers' movement beginning in 2020 which has even a larger scale and certainly is longer lived than each of the previous individual agitations. The types of grievances, the totality of which Featherstone refers to as the 'maps of grievance',¹⁵ the social structure integral to the resisting community and the nature of engagement with globalizing changes are all similar in some senses but strikingly different in others in the two examples being analyzed here. What is striking is changes in the support base of the farmers' union(s) and changes in the ideology of the leadership of the union(s), operating in a different political milieu as both the state-level and national-level political party structure has been altered. The current BJP national government is transforming both state-Centre relations, as well as majority-minority relations, in moving toward a majoritarian ethnic democracy¹⁶ and promulgating top-down society changing policies which appear not only anti-minority, but anti-poor. While the previous protests involved more tinkering around the borders of government policies to create an increasingly farmer friendly environment, the current protests are in resistance to the passage of legislation, known to farmers as the *Kala-Kanun* or black laws, which would alter the agricultural system entirely.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a newly consolidated hegemonic class of wealthier farmers confronted what they viewed as 'crisis of agriculture' because the gains of the GR prosperity were slowing. This new class of strengthened landed peasantry, dominated by middle castes (sometimes given the designation of 'backward castes' depending on state politics) had emerged, firstly because of government policies which consolidated land plots and gave title to the 'tiller', and secondly because of GR policies which supported and empowered middle to larger farmers who adopted the GR technology. Following this emergence of commercialized farming and a class of capitalist farmers, and in the face of erosion of government support in subsidies and guaranteed procurement price of grains which was the basis of this new class, the Jat Sikh dominated political party, the SAD, was interested in the formation of a farmers' union which would organize peasants in opposition to growing Marxist, particularly Naxalite, influence.¹⁷

It was largely Jat Sikh farmers that comprised the dominant social base of the SAD, a cadre-based party with a storied history of agitational politics. The same social base supported the BKU. The BKU led a number of very successful agitations for improvements in farmers' economic as well as social and political conditions, from forcing the government to waive certain charges and taxes, to compelling tractor manufacturers to replace defective tractors to coercing government employees to apologize and make amends for their corrupt ways. The leadership of the BKU did not have ideas of transforming society or the

structure of the economy; they were not ideologues. Rather the intention was to press for the best deal the farmers were able to negotiate with the government through a series of agitations and political links.

The current farmers' movement, still led in Punjab by farmers' unions dominated by Sikh Jats, has less of a tie to the SAD due to political changes in the party structure in the state. The SAD, a shadow of its former self in some ways, was slow to the table in opposition to the three agricultural laws given its longtime electoral alliance with the BJP and created a rift with the farmers by initially supporting the new agricultural bills. Sikh Jat farmers' support has fallen away from the party over the last few elections, and there is now 'popular distrust of the self-proclaimed "farmers' party".¹⁸ The current Central government appears pro-corporate, pro-globalization and inclined to promulgate policies which resonate as anti-minority, (in this Sikh majority state particularly), as well as oriented toward the international market. Certain socio-economic changes are restructuring, to some degree, class relationships in the state,¹⁹ while changes in the various spin-offs of the BKU itself has led to a rethinking and promotion of different types of class coalitions in the face of deteriorating conditions in the agricultural sector.²⁰ Currently the farmers' movement is slanted in a more progressive direction with a wider coalition of support.

In making this argument, I am drawing on Featherstone's questioning of why certain anti-neoliberal or anti-globalization movements share broader ideological affinities, while others may be 'exclusionary' or 'nationalistic'. These 'place-based struggles,' which he terms 'militant particularisms', can take a very specific form depending on the local political and economic structure and the history and precipitating issues involved. That is, rather than struggles being part of a unified response to neoliberalism, each has its own unique response and produces different types of identities through conflicts of caste, gender and class.²¹ While the commonality in the protests of the 1970s/1980s and the contemporary protests in Punjab may be the precipitating crisis of globalizing and neo-liberalizing impacts or the threat of these impacts, the response may not necessarily become, as leftist activists might hope, the unifying of such resistances as a broad-based left response. Rather agitations may 'bring unequal geographies of power into contestation.'²² Therefore, 'exclusionary forms of the local and national' could emerge 'in opposition to forms of the global' and movements that connect different socio-economic groups may 'marginalize the grievances' of those of the weaker groups.²³

In the 1970s and 1980s, the BKU claimed to speak for the 'rural' as opposed to the 'urban', sometimes also described as 'Bharat vs India', while more clearly speaking for a specific set of classes; the strength of the BKU was actively used against agricultural laborers.²⁴ Dalits in that era were compensated to show up at demonstrations and threatened if they did not. It was also the case that the BKU promoted linkages with other farmers movements across states and brought together Hindus and Sikhs in protests at a time when the communal atmosphere had been vitiated. For this reason, it was possible to view the farmers' protests as the root of a class struggle which would lead to bridging

communal identities.²⁵ Currently a shift in class alliances could be mitigating the extent to which the weaker groups are marginalized from the hoped-for gains of the protests as much of the leadership of the current stand-off at the Delhi borders are actively promoting cross-caste, cross-class and gender inclusive linkages with those left out of the previous protests. Concern about the external implications of a pro-corporate change in the agricultural system could smooth over, at least temporarily, internal caste and class divisions.²⁶

Founding of the BKU and Growth of the Farmers' Movement

Prior to the establishment of the farmers' organizations, it was the Kisan Sabhas of the communist parties which were active in organizing the peasantry in opposition to the feudal landlords, the government or imperialism.²⁷ After the GR altered the class structure in the countryside, however, the strategy of the political left changed from trying to unite the entirety of the peasantry and laborers, to organizing only the small peasantry and agricultural workers in opposition to a new class of capitalist farmers, as the sharing of common interests that would unite all agricultural classes no longer existed. The CPI and the CPM both established agricultural workers unions.²⁸

The strength of the Kisan Sabhas was undermined by the growth of the BKU, 'a material loss to Kisan Sabhas and the mobilizing capacity of the communists,'²⁹ precisely as Singh argued the Akali leaders intended. Issues like 'remunerative prices' became the mobilizing slogan and issues around class exploitation ceased to mobilize groups of people reflecting a 'change in the agrarian relations.' As Mukherji poetically phrased it, 'The veterans of many a class conflict were left guessing in disbelief as their base of agrarian support slipped from under their feet.' And, he argues, as the BKU grasped the structural changes in the countryside, and became spokespersons of this new class, they were at the forefront of the "great transformation."³⁰

The BKU, initially the *Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union* (PKZU) (Zimindara here means landowner of any size in Punjabi, rather than Zamindar which would refer to a large landowner or tax farmer before Zamindari abolition)³¹ was founded in 1972 by the union of 11 smaller farmers' organizations, all of which were also Sikh based, at a farmers' gathering in Ludhiana. This organization was a reflection of the consolidation of a class of commercial farmers, who not only prospered economically, but dominated the rural areas socially and politically. Although Sharad Joshi had yet to popularize the 'Bharat vs India' concept, some of the farmers who had adopted GR practices and technology were concerned that farming was becoming increasingly unremunerative and joined together to speak not just for the farmers but 'the rural'.³² The Union was comprised largely of Sikh Jats - in fact, 96.18% of the members were Jats according to Kehar Singh's survey published in 1990. They followed Sikh socio-religious conventions and when meetings were held in Gurudwaras, they began with '*Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*' and their agitational slogans were '*Bole So Nihal, Sat Shri Akal*', etc. The Union did not attract women.

The impetus to form a state-wide farmers' union came from a bumper wheat crop in 1971-1972 which was met with the procurement price set lower than the year before. Farmers, concerned that their expectations of a continued growing income and increasing prosperity appeared challenged, met first with the then Punjab Chief Minister Giani Zail Singh and then with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Gandhi's refusal to commit to any farmer relief going forward was the driving force behind the conviction that a farmers' platform was needed.³³

Kehar Singh also suggests that there is a political argument: as the SAD, party of the Jat Sikh farmers, lost elections in 1972, and Giani Zail Singh, a non-Jat Sikh became CM, the need for creating a pressure group type of organization presented itself.³⁴ There were individual political aspirations at work here, as well. Similar to the situation when Chaudhary Charan Singh, a legendary farmers' leader and spokesperson of the 'middle castes', established the BKU as a political platform in Uttar Pradesh in 1978 when he was out of power,³⁵ former SAD MLA P.S. Kadian was a very influential figure in creating the PKZU. He had followed Justice Gurnam Singh into what became the political wilderness after a party split and the PKZU provided him with the space from which to re-enter Akali politics or, as he did ultimately, the Lok Dal. The other individuals also involved in creating this union tended to be politically active, many with a background in the services and many with a background in positions of influence – co-operative societies, Panchayats, etc.

There was support for the union across the board. According to Singh's survey, in terms of landholdings: 3.50% of the members were landless, 10.19% marginal farmers and 19.11% small farmers, while the medium peasantry were the largest group at 43.31%. The smaller farmers did support the farmers' movement as caste and religious solidarity linked some of the groups together in a populist manner and even small farmers did have concerns about input prices and procurement rates. Small farmers were also united with larger farmers in mutual opposition to agricultural workers' pay and conditions.

Union rules were in place to keep the organization apolitical, that is, office holders in the PKZU were prohibited from being office holders in any political party. The PKZU, which changed its name to the BKU in 1980 in an effort to contribute to a pan-India organization following Charan Singh's BKU, was quite adamant about this position, breaking ties with unions that did pursue an overtly political route. In spite of the continued close relationship with the Akalis, the BKU did have an alliance with the Lok Dal when it believed the SAD was not aggressive enough in responding to its demands.

In the 1980s, the Indira Gandhi-led INC was in power at the Centre after a brief period of non-Congress Party rule, in which the Akali Dal had played a part. The SAD had also actively opposed Indira Gandhi's 'Emergency', and in so doing earned her animosity. Congress had just regained control of the state government in Punjab by dismissing the Akali-Janata government there, when Congress won the national parliamentary elections. The BKU had been close to both sides of this alliance as the Bharatiya Lok Dal, one of the *formateur* Parties of what became the Janata Party, was led by Chaudhary Charan Singh. In fact, the Punjab BKU lobbied for Charan Singh in the tussle of who was to be Prime

Minister in the Janata Party government and supported Lok Dal candidates in the BKU's brief moment of disillusionment with the Akalis. It appeared to one observer that when Partap Singh Kadian was President of the BKU, 'the Union became almost a wing of the Lok Dal' with Kadian and 4 other leaders contesting the 1980 elections on the Lok Dal ticket after stepping down from their official role with the Union.³⁶ Later, however, Charan Singh lost his luster with the Punjab BKU as he opposed the Dharam Yudh Morcha agitation.

But the relationship of the Akali Dal and BKU was not completely straight forward. Gill and Singhal argue that it is easy to see the BKU as almost an arm of the SAD and in fact Gandhi argues that government intelligence saw it this way. But there was one view that BKU-led morchas were allowed by the government to undermine the peasant base of the SAD by promoting an organization with such similar demographics and aims without the negative trappings of a political party. It is the case that during the tumultuous times of the mid-1980s, under draconian actions by the State against agitational activity, the BKU was allowed a much wider freedom to maneuver than trade union or Kisan Sabha activity, perhaps viewed initially as less challenging to the State than the opposition parties.³⁷ This position changed dramatically after Operation Bluestar when the BKU declared the Central Government 'enemy number one of the farmers.'³⁸

Initial demands of the *Punjab Khetibari Zimindara Union* was set out in a brochure written by P.S. Kadian.³⁹ Their demands drew from their interests of representing the 'rural' as versus the 'urban' which, as Balagopal points out, only solidifies their role as the hegemonic class by attributing to themselves the ability to speak for all farmers and all those who draw their living from the agricultural sector.⁴⁰ To counter what became known as 'urban bias' demands were for the strengthening of the rural sector. Unlike, current objectives set out by farmers' unions, these included reservations for the 'rural population' in services, colleges and special quotas inside quotas for rural SCs, an end of discrimination against 'rural people' by the provision of better schools, hospitals, telephones and other infrastructure, pensions for small farmers (defined as up to 5 acres), interest free loans for small farmers, scholarships for the children of small farmers, etc. These types of urban verses rural objectives are not included in the demands of the leadership of the contemporary protests which are limited more directly to economic issues, as will be discussed below.

Included in the objectives also were the demands which mostly benefitted the larger farmers (although all farmers are impacted by MSPs and input costs/subsidies) who dominated the union which stressed the issues that inspired the creation of the union: prices of various inputs should be 'brought down' and higher procurement prices for crops should be set which took into account not only the cost of production but also the relative cost of consumer goods which had to be purchased in 'urban prices'. The Union demanded a seat at the table in the Agricultural Prices Commission and also demanded procurement prices be announced before the sowing season. The BKU also raised a whole gamut of social and inefficiency ills: greater respect for women, the end of overspending

on celebrations such as weddings, the ending of corruption, adulteration, smuggling, etc.

Land, of course, was a major issue. The farmers' union was adamantly opposed to land ceilings particularly since there had been several time periods when land ceilings were imposed, but always only on agricultural land. The BKU demanded that farmers with less than 10 acres should be allocated more land in order to be viable (this is an interesting demand in the light of the current situation whereby India-wide 68.45% of rural dwellers own less than a hectare (2.47 acres) of land.) Chaudhary Charan Singh similarly argued that small farmers should be allocated any excess land, as opposed to the landless laborers, who did not even have a place to put their dwelling, and for whom the lack of a piece of land was and is a huge impediment to a life with dignity.⁴¹ Clearly, small farmers were included in the rhetoric and in the demands. Laborers find no place here, except possibly in being included as 'rural people'. However, the issues of small farmers were represented in the breach in actual agitations launched by the BKU⁴² who were in some cases actively opposed to laborers' issues.⁴³ As Gill argues, 'About the particular needs of poor peasants, agricultural workers and women, the BKU has generally remained silent.'⁴⁴

The Current Farmers' Agitations

Currently, the social, economic and political context is much different. The farmers' movement emerged as a response to specific legislation promulgated by the BJP national government designed to precipitate large scale economic restructuring of the agricultural sector. While there have been protests to national issues such as The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which gave preferential access to Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist immigrants from neighboring countries with regard to applying for Indian citizenship and The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, which redefined the political status and relationship to the Center of the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir,⁴⁵ there has not been concomitant large scale agitations in Punjab similar to the Sikh nationalist movement.⁴⁶ However, while the Sikh nationalist movement was a unifying issue between the BKU and much of the Sikh political leadership, the response to BJP government policies has sparked a division in the current farmers' agitation. There is a bit of a delicate dance between ideologically motivated leadership and unions with others who fear that the united front will splinter if possibly divisive issues are introduced aside from specific issues related to agriculture. Some of the political left associated unions have long been resisting the BJP government's moves toward adopting an anti-minority Hindutva ideology through autocratic anti-democratic means and would prefer to broaden the protests to include these issues.⁴⁷

Rather than one organization spearheading the movement, the current protests are associated with 35 organizations, 32 of which are from Punjab and are organized under the umbrella of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha. They have differing ideologies or interests; some are affiliated with political parties, most are not. The unions are trying to enforce a type of unity by, for example, ejecting

two groups held responsible for some violence during the protests on Republic Day 2021 as they had deviated from the designated route.⁴⁸ Rather than a plethora of demands by the unions, the current leadership is attempting to keep laser focused on a very specific set of issues, that is, the repeal of the Modi government's new agricultural laws, along with agitating for actual legislation that will inoculate the current procurement system from being altered, although the Central government has argued that it has no intention of making these changes. That is, the farmers are asking for guarantees that there will continue to be a minimum support price (MSP), and the procurement system based on *Mandis* will continue. They are also demanding the jettisoning of the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, which the farmers are concerned will eliminate free electricity or raise electricity prices as private providers will be allowed to compete with what is now a state-based system controlled by state governments. Farmers are also demanding the release of those sanctioned for burning paddy (a practice which is a large contributor to air quality in the area, including in Delhi), and a change in those relevant laws.

There was no farmers' movement to speak of in Punjab from 1984 to 1992 as draconian laws in the state prohibited political activity until elections took place to usher Punjab into a post-conflict era. Inactivity and factionalization had weakened the farmers' representation and, according to Gill, bears some explanatory power for farmers' distress including the growth in farmer suicides. Rising debt, sometimes failed crops due to weather or pest invasions, unremunerative pricing of crops, had been met with government indifference.⁴⁹

In the much factionalized run-up to what became Operation Bluestar and the fractured polity and government repression after that, politics began to divide the formerly apolitical union which had actively opposed other farmers' unions taking the electoral politics route. Gill refers to this as a 'the dual track approach to regional party politics' that is not formally aligned, but has 'informal closeness'. Certainly, the BKU had supported candidates in the past and was known to be close to Prakash Singh Badal. Some individuals in the BKU backed Simranjit Singh Mann in his winning bid for a Parliament seat in the 1989 elections, while Ajmer Singh Lakhwal had an important role in supporting the boycott of the elections by the Akalis in 1992.⁵⁰

The BKU had split into two factions in 1988. Bhupinder Singh Mann and Balbir Singh Rajewal were divided from Ajmer Singh Lakhwal and Manjit Singh Kadian on issues to do with Union organization but also on ideology and the way forward for the farmers' movement. The Mann-Rajewal faction were in favor of liberalization of agricultural policy in line with the policies of Maharashtra farmers' leader Sharad Joshi, notable as one of the few farmers' heads who was in favor of the Dunkel Draft of GATT which would open Indian agriculture up to globalizing impacts while withdrawing large scale government intervention of subsidies and supports. Presumably Joshi and this faction would have been in favor of the new agricultural laws? The other faction took the route more traveled by in aligning with the new head of Charan Singh's BKU, Mahender Singh Tikait.⁵¹ There is also an argument that Mann's nomination to

the Rajya Sabha was the precipitating event of the split due to political jealousies.

In 1995, the BKU (Ekta) split from the Lakhawal faction. Mukherji refers to the BKU (Ekta) as the 'extreme left' re-entering the agrarian scene after a long absence.⁵² A second split led to two BKU (Ekta) factions - the BKU (Ekta Ugrahan), founded by a retired service member in 2002, emerged as the largest faction and a dominant force at the protests. Gill and Singhal, writing in 1984, argued that the political left, specifically the communist parties, were ideologically committed to not allowing the strength of the larger farmers to be mobilized in opposition to the interests of the agricultural workers. The BKU, they state, 'had no such consciousness or ideological barrier,' and will 'disrupt' efforts to forge unity with peasants and laborers. Quite the opposite is happening currently, as the BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) is aggressively reaching out in various campaigns and rallies to forge relations with laborers, as well as to other unions and groups that represent those that were previously included only as an afterthought or not included at all. This includes women. According to Bahl, thousands of women, who can be identified by their yellow *chumis* (scarves) as affiliated with the BKU (Ekta Ugrahan), can be seen actively participating, some in leadership roles, in the movement and protests.⁵³

So, unlike the emergence of the BKU in the 1970s and 1980s, when it filled a vacuum that had been opened up by the left's singular focus on smaller farmers and workers, the current activity of the union represents a new move to engage with the left as well as new organizations such as the *Zameen Prapti Sangharsh Committee* (Land Rights Struggle Committee) which fights to enable Dalits to claim village land which is owed to them by law. There are reasons both of structural change, of politics and of political choices underlying this new alliance. The structural change of a shift to 'external contradictions' unites those of the lower socio-economic strata who are faced with increased farmers' distress.⁵⁴ In those struggles of small farmers, landless laborers, Dalits, and women, the unifying force may be the looming threat of even more immiserisation through the introduction of pro-corporate policies.

Small farmers and agricultural laborers are concerned that the erosion of government grain procurement at a set price (and the concomitant storing of that grain) will erode the system of grain distribution through the government Public Distribution System (PDS).⁵⁵ Laborers are concerned that the consolidation of large corporate farms, which they expect will be the result of the farmers' laws, will change the labor market to their detriment.⁵⁶ Farmers with very small holdings who grow food for consumption to supplement their ill paid agricultural or small scale industrial work fear they will lose access to that land.⁵⁷ Pramod Kumar of the Centre for the study of Development and Communication (IDC) defines the 'map of grievances' as more of an existential threat than the earlier protests in saying:

Most of the protests in the '80s revolved largely around the enhancement of support prices, institutionalized credit system, regular supply of inputs on subsidized rates, etc. Those protests used to threaten to stop the supply of food grain to other states.

Whereas now the crisis is privatization of agricultural operations and of food grain not finding a market. This protest is for survival.

He argues that every sector of the classes that run the state - small shop owners to the intelligentsia - are supporting the farmers today.⁵⁸

Prior to the most recent protests, BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) had been actively participating or leading in a number of protests or agitations, in years of 'pioneering work' in an effort to bridge caste and class divides, particularly between farmers and laborers.⁵⁹ 'Mazdoor-Kisan Ekta' has been a major slogan of these protests. This is a challenging gulf to bridge, as the relationships can be quite hostile. There are many examples of farmers launching 'social boycotts' against landless laborers, often Dalits, which freezes them out not only from employment, but access to food, water, fodder for their animals, or even some land to use to relieve themselves, in response to wage demands.⁶⁰ However, Dalits are joining the movement as external dynamics, concern of corporate takeover of farms, compel them to put aside concerns over the internal issues of caste and class conflict, in a belief that if the farmers lose their land, they will lose their employment.⁶¹ It is the case though, that efforts to recruit Dalits to the current protest fall short of the hoped for numbers on the barricades.

For example, the BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) organized a major Mazdoor Kisan Ekta Maha rally in February 2021 along with a workers' union, the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union (Punjab Farm Workers Union). Over 100,000 people attended including many women. Workers were asked to come to the border at Tikri on a specific day, few were there. Reasons were many. Workers needed transport, could not afford to miss a day of work, and their focus in survival was on a different issue - accessing and getting paid for work done under the MGNREGA. Interviews with Dalit laborers showed that some did not understand the issues and would only show up to support farmers if they got something in return.⁶²

The protests against the agricultural laws are understood in two ways by popular knowledge - throwing farmers onto the vagaries of market prices without government support or any other avenue of employment will destroy all but the wealthiest, but also in another way that the thrust of the reforms are seen as anti-poor as well as anti-farmer. Balagopal argued in the era of the 1980s that:

'There are two types of pressures from rural India: one, the struggle of the poor peasants and landless laborer, and the other, the struggle of the relatively better-off peasants usually called 'middle peasants' or 'rich peasants'...The movements of the rural poor fight the rural rich - the landlords and the contractors, for instance - whereas the movements of the 'middle' peasants fight the urban rich and the imperialists'.⁶³

Now, however, one could argue that demands to overturn the farm laws are emanating from both sets. Ali argues that, 'the smaller and marginal farmers ... seem even less enthusiastic at the prospect of being left to negotiate with big agricultural interests.'⁶⁴

Where is the State Political Structure in the Midst of all this?

The Akali Dal's close alliance with the landed Sikh peasantry has been undermined to some extent, and in fact although all the political parties in Punjab with the exception of the BJP support the protests, a strong anti-Centre sentiment is being led by the Congress Party which does not have a history of relying on farmers' unrest or large-scale agitations in Punjab. The present-day Congress CM, Amarinder Singh, lambasts the Centre, along with opposition parties in the state, for discriminating against or trying to destroy Punjab. In an effort to lead on farmers' issue, the current Punjab government legislated against the Centre's laws even though this gesture had no real force. In their battle with the BJP, farmers campaigned for and cheered the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress' recent victory in the West Bengal elections, as it was a defeat for what seems to be a BJP juggernaut.⁶⁵ Interviews with farmers at the camps surrounding the Delhi border resonate with anger toward the BJP, and most particularly with Modi himself. Drawing on themes of Sikh resistance and symbols of heroes and martyrs of past battles and oppression, journalist Arunabh Saikia argues, 'The resentment is so visceral and omnipresent that it is difficult to imagine in today's India, barring possibly Kashmir.' The farmers feel attacked by a 'majoritarian and dictatorial' central government.⁶⁶

Currently, the SAD is struggling to continue as a cadre-based party with an illustrious formation story and history and no longer enjoys such a clear link with its support base which has seen a 'steady decline' in the last few elections.⁶⁷ It lost badly in the last assembly elections in 2017. Losing was, perhaps, expected as an incumbent of 2 consecutive terms but the margin of loss was surprising. Several factors impacted this: the perception that the party was becoming a family affair as is the fate with many parties in India, the failure of the party to respond to the struggles of the farmers including a rash of farmer suicides related to crop failures, and the erosion of the independence of the Sikh religio-political system of the SGPC and Akal Takht Jathedars. There was a case of an insult or sacrilege (*beadbi*) to Sikh religious feelings over disrespect shown to the Guru Granth Sahib which was inadequately addressed by the SAD. Also, an effort by the party to become a secular party with broad appeal undermined its position as spokesman for the Sikh community; this related to the ability of a new third party, the Aam Aadmi Party, to draw away some of its supporters. During both sets of protests there was a Congress administration in power in Punjab, however much was different both in Centre-State relations and in the party structure in Punjab.

Conclusion

Farmers' movements in Punjab have been a political pendulum swing from leftist leadership and ideas, to center right and now back to anti-corporate, even socialist ideas and policy agitations. It is not completely clear how closely the bulk of the farmers follow the ideas expressed by the leadership, but the emotive reaction of betrayal seems visceral. In the 1970s-1980s protests, the

establishment of the BKU and its close links with one of the dominant parties in the state drawing on the Jat Sikh peasantry as its constituency strengthened the position of the larger farmers vs-a-vie the marginal farmers, landless laborers and Dalits. GR policies and technologies helped to create this dominant class which did not just control land, but dominated all the levers of power - political parties, cooperatives, panchayats, Sikh religio-political institutions and organizations, etc. A pressure group rather than an ideologically motivated movement, the BKU agitated for the best terms in the agricultural arena for its constituents.

The current protests emerge out of a different challenge; a pro-corporate, pro-globalization juggernaut stemming from the Centre which challenges all classes in the agricultural sector except perhaps the wealthiest farmers. The farmers' unions have multiplied and the largest are allied with leftist parties or groups. The political parties in the state have also multiplied with the Aam Admi Party now playing the role of the primary opposition party, sidelining the Akali Dal which no longer commands such a connection with the Jat Sikh peasant social base as previously. This movement opens up space for new kinds of alliances. The BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) is reaching out to not just leftist parties, but organizations demanding the opposite of the demand from the former BKU (which opposed land ceilings); demanding lower land ceilings and excess land diverted to the landless, support for Dalits and women, as well as much more in the way of social support from the government. If new alliances are struck, this could conceivably increase the welfare of lower socio-economic groups and also prevent the SAD, should it opt to move to a wider social base, from becoming marginal to the political process.

Notes

¹ Prabhjot Singh, 'When Chandigarh had a Kisan Nagar', *The Tribune*, December 10, 2020.

² Sucha Singh Gill and K.C. Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation: Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture', *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, Vol. 19, no. 40 (Oct. 6, 1984): 1730.

³ Gobind Thukral, 'Punjab farmers block governor's residence to press for their demands', *India Today*, April 15, 1984.

⁴ Mary Anne Weaver, 'Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab show rare unity in protest over wheat', *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 30, 1984.

⁵ Cited in Kirpal Dhillon, *Identity and Survival: Sikh Militancy in India 1978-1993* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006), 166-167.

⁶ Partha Nath Mukherji, 'The Farmers' Movement in Punjab: Politics of Pressure Groups and Pressure of Party Politics', *EPW* 33, no. 18 (May 2-8, 1998): 1047, 1048 footnote 5.

⁷ K.R. Krishna Gandhi, 'The New Peasant Movement in Punjab', In *Peasant Movement in Modern India*, ed. Sunil Sahasrabudhey. (Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1989), 66-67.

⁸ Sucha Singh Gill, 'Development Crisis in Agriculture and its Political Implications - An Enquiry into the Punjab Problem', in *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab*, eds. Paul Wallace and Surendra Chopra (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1988), 449.

⁹ Gill and Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation: Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture', 1732.

¹⁰ Kehar Singh, *Farmers' Movement and Pressure Group Politics* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1990), 51-52.

¹¹ Aditya Menon, 'Khalistanis have Infiltrated Farmers' Protest, says Modi Government', *The Quint*, January 12, 2021. Some leaders of the current protests have also criticized those whom they call Khalistanis for disrupting the protests. Yet, Ruldu Singh Mansa, leader of Punjab BKU, was suspended for 15 days for criticizing Khalistanis and indirectly, Jarnail S. Bhindranwale. Ugrahan also called out groups within the 32 Unions who are dishonest and draw on 'Khalistani money and power', Sukhmeet Bhasin, 'Fissures in farm unions over Parliament march', *Tribune News Service*, April 27, 2021. So, this interface of the legacy and meaning of Khalistan and Bhindranwale with the farmers' agitation is complex.

¹² Pritam Singh, 'Growing Separatists Trend', *EPW*, 19, no. 5 (February 4, 1984): 196.

¹³ In fact, Brass asks in a footnote in his very important essay on the Punjab crisis, which focused largely on Centre-State relations, state-level resistance to centralization, and the personalization of politics by Indira Gandhi, whether perhaps all of this emphasis on politics misses the point. 'It is possible', he suggests, that what he termed the 'Punjab Crisis' was really at its core a reaction to green revolution inspired class changes, the results of which were exacerbated by the creation of a ready supply of educated young men for whom no white-collar jobs existed. Paul R. Brass, 'The Punjab Crisis and the Unity of India', In *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations*, ed. Atul Kohli (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 172, footnote 2.

¹⁴ See Prateek Waghre for a discussion of media coverage, particularly social media coverage, of the on-going farmers' protests. 'Radically Networked Societies: The case of the farmers' protests in India', *Indian Public Policy Review* 2, no. 3 (2021): 41-64.

¹⁵ David Featherstone, 'Thinking Militant Particularisms Politically: Resistances to Neoliberalism in India', in *India's New Economic Policy: A Critical Analysis*, ed. Waqar Ahmed, et al. (Routledge, 2010, 1st edition).

¹⁶ Jaffrelot and Verniers refer to it as a 'de jure ethnic democracy'; Christophe Jaffrelot and Gilles Verniers, 'A new party system or a new political system?', *Contemporary South Asia*, 28, no. (2020): 141-154.

¹⁷ Kehar Singh, 'Farmers' Movements and Pressure Group Politics', 36-39.

¹⁸ Ashutosh Kumar, 'Shiromani Akali Dal (1920-2020): Ideology, strategy, and support base', *Sikh Formations* 17, Issue 1-2 (2021). DOI: [10.1080/17448727.2021.1873654](https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2021.1873654).

-
- ¹⁹ Jonathan Pattenden and Gaurav Bansal, 'A New Class Alliance in the Indian Countryside? From New Farmers' Movements to the 2020 Protest Wave', *EPW* 56, no. 26-27 (June 26, 2021).
- ²⁰ Sinha, Shreya. 'TIF-The Agrarian Crisis in Punjab and the Making of the Anti-Farm Protests', *The India Forum* (December 4, 2020): 3-5.
- ²¹ David Featherstone, 'Thinking Militant Particularisms Politically', 263-264.
- ²² *Ibid*, 265.
- ²³ *Ibid*, 264.
- ²⁴ Gill and Singhal cite one specific example in 1979 when the then BKU President Kadian threatened violence against agricultural workers who were agitating for higher wages. Gill and Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation', 1732.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*. Weaver, 'Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab show rare unity'.
- ²⁶ "We are One": Why Punjab's Landless Dalits are Standing with Protesting Farmers', *The Wire*, January 7, 2021; Aditya Bahl, 'A New Border in an Old Republic', *Himal Southasian*, April 28, 2021.
- ²⁷ Gill and Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation', 1728.
- ²⁸ Sucha Singh Gill, 'Agrarian Change in the Green Revolution Belt' In *New Farmers' Unions in India*, ed. Tom Brass (Great Britain: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1995), 202.
- ²⁹ Gill and Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitations', 1732.
- ³⁰ Partha Nath Mukherji, 'The Farmers' Movement in Punjab', 1047.
- ³¹ Partha Nath Mukherji, 'The Farmers' Movement in Punjab', 1048, footnote 3.
- ³² Balagopal, 23.
- ³³ K.R. Krishna Gandhi, 'The New Peasant Movement in Punjab', 58-59.
- ³⁴ Kehar Singh, 'Farmers' Movement and Pressure Group Politics', 36.
- ³⁵ Zoya Hasan, 'Self-Serving Guardians: Formation and Strategy of the Bhartiya Kisan Union', *EPW*, Dec. 2, 1989, Vol. 24, No. 48, p. 2664.
- ³⁶ Singh, *Farmers' Movement and Pressure Group Politics*, 84-85.
- ³⁷ Gill and Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation', 1731.
- ³⁸ Gandhi, 'The New Peasant Movement in Punjab', 68.
- ³⁹ The document can be found in Kehar Singh, *Farmers' Movement and Pressure Group Politics* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1990), 25-27.
- ⁴⁰ K. Balagopal, 'Rich Peasant, Poor Peasant', *Seminar*, Issue No, 352, *Farmer Power*, December 1988, 23.
- ⁴¹ Paul R. Brass, *An Indian Political Life: Charan Singh and Congress Politics, 1937-1961* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2011): 123.
- ⁴² Gill and Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation: Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture', 1729.
- ⁴³ Singh, 'Farmers' Movement and Pressure Group Politics', 63.
- ⁴⁴ Sucha Singh Gill, 'The Farmers' Movement and Agrarian Change in the Green Revolution Belt of North-west India', in *New Farmers' Movements in India*, ed. Tom Brass (Portland and Essex: Frank Cass & Co. LTD., 1995), 205.
- ⁴⁵ With regards to the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, the BJP had campaigned for years on abolishing Article 370 which gave a separate status to

Jammu and Kashmir as India's only Muslim majority state and one which represented an on-going bleeding wound between India and Pakistan. It appeared to be just campaign rhetoric and too drastic to be implemented, but along with building the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, policies and undertakings that did not seem possible are coming to pass.

⁴⁶ And much less resistance to demonetization which pauperized whole segments of the society.

⁴⁷ Sourav Roy Barman and Anju Agnihotri Chaba, 'Ugrahan wears his politics on his sleeve: 'Called us Pak, now Naxals'', *The Indian Express*, December 13, 2020.

⁴⁸ Raaki Jagga, '2 Punjab unions suspended from united front of 32 unions, barred from stage', *The Indian Express*, Feb 7, 2021.

⁴⁹ Sucha Singh Gill, 'Farmers' Movement: Continuity and Change', *EPW*, (July 3, 2004): 2964-2965.

⁵⁰ Gill, 'Agrarian Change in the Green Revolution Belt', 202-203.

⁵¹ See Mukherji for a description of the nature of the split, based apparently on interviews with those involved. Partha Singh Mukheri, 'The Farmers' Movement in Punjab', 1047.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Aditya Bahl, 'A New Border in an Old Republic', *Himal Southasian*, April 28, 2021.

⁵⁴ Pattenden and Bansal, 'A New Class Alliance in the Indian Countryside?'

⁵⁵ Narendra Pani, 'Farm Bills and the PDS Conundrum', *The Hindu Business Line*, November 3, 2020.

⁵⁶ 'For some months, we earn daily wages of RS 300-400 by harvesting other people's crops. Big commercial agro-firms will acquire farms and they will not hire us.' Quote from Mazabhi Sikh landless cultivator Gurmail Singh. Quoted in Anumeha Yadav, 'Why landless and marginal farmers are the backbone of farmer protests', *Newslaundry*, December 4, 2020.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Pramod Kumar, 'The farmers' protest began a year ago. How has it lasted this long?', *The Indian Express*, June 23, 2021.

⁵⁹ Shreya Sinha, 'TIF-The Agrarian Crisis in Punjab', 4.

⁶⁰ Pukhraj Singh, 'The Farm Law Protests Could Whitewash the Blatant Inequality of Rural Punjab', *The Wire*, December 5, 2020.

⁶¹ Sandeep Singh, 'We are One': Why Punjab's Landless Dalits are Standing with Protesting Farmers', *The Wire*, January 7, 2021.

⁶² Prabhjit Singh, 'In the farm laws protest, are Punjab's landless peasants getting left behind?', *Caravan Magazine*, March 22, 2021.

⁶³ K. Balagopal, 'Rich Peasant, Poor Peasant', 19.

⁶⁴ Asim Ali, 'Farmers' protest shows Modi's politics is caught between India's two middle classes', *The Print*, December 9, 2020.

⁶⁵ Prabhjit Singh, 'Jubilation at Singhu border as farmers celebrate BJP's defeat in West Bengal elections', *Caravan Magazine*, 3 May, 2021.

⁶⁶ Arunabh Saikia, 'Punjab ground report: Six months on, farm protest remains strong - and united. Where is it headed?', *Scroll.in*, February 25, 2021.

⁶⁷ Ashutosh Kumar, 'Shiromani Akali Dal (1920-2020): Ideology, strategy, and support base', 19-21.

References

- Ali, Asim. 'Farmers' protest shows Modi's politics is caught between India's two middle classes', *The Print*, December 9, 2020.
- Balagopal, K. 'Rich Peasant, Poor Peasant', *Seminar*, Issue No. 352, *Farmer Power* (December 1988).
- Barman, Sourav Roy and Anju Agnihotri Chaba. 'Ugrahan wears his politics on his sleeve: 'Called us Pak, now Naxals'', *The Indian Express*, December 13, 2020.
- Bentall, Jim and Stuart Corbridge. 'Urban-Rural Relations, Demand Politics and the 'New Agrarianism' in Northwest India: The Bharatiya Kisan Union', *Transactions of The Institute of British Geographers*, 21, no. 1 (1996): 27-48.
- Bhasin, Sukhmeet. 'Fissures in farm unions over Parliament march', *Tribune News Service*, April 27, 2021.
- Brass, Paul R. *An Indian Political Life: Charan Singh and Congress Politics, 1937-1961*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011.
- Brass, Paul R. 'The Punjab Crisis and the Unity of India'. In *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations*, edited by Atul Kohli, 169-213. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Dhillon, Kirpal. *Identity and Survival: Sikh Militancy in India 1978-1993*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006.
- Featherstone, David. 'Thinking Militant Particularisms Politically: Resistances to Neoliberalism in India' In *India's New Economic Policy: A Critical Analysis*, edited by Waqar Ahmed, et al, 261-280. Routledge, 2010, 1st edition. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203846810>
- Gandhi, K.R. Krishna. 'The New Peasant Movement in Punjab' In *Peasant Movement in Modern India*, edited by Sunil Sahasrabudhey, 55-75. Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1989. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002219410>
- Gill, Sucha Singh and K.C. Singhal. 'Farmers' Agitation: Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture', *EPW* 19, No. 40 (1984): 1728-1732.

Gill, Sucha Singh. 'Farmers' Movement: Continuity and Change', *EPW* 39, no. 27 (July 3, 2004): 2964-2966.

Gill, Sucha Singh. 'Development Crisis in Agriculture and its Political Implications - An Enquiry into the Punjab Problem' In *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab*, edited by Paul Wallace and Surendra Chopra, 436-450. Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1988.

Gill, Sucha Singh. 'The Farmers' Movement and Agrarian Change in the Green Revolution Belt of North-West India' In *New Farmers' Movements in India*, edited by Tom Brass, 195- 211. Great Britain: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1995.

Gill, Sucha Singh. 'Agrarian Change and Farmers' Movement in Punjab: As Study of BKU' In *Social and Political Movements: Readings on Punjab*, edited by Harish K. Puri and Paramjit S. Judge, 356-377. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2000.

Hasan, Zoya. 'Self-Serving Guardians: Formation and Strategy of the Bhartiya Kisan Union', *EPW* 24, no. 48, (December 2, 1989): 2663-2665+2667-2670.

Jagga, Raakhi. '2 Punjab unions suspended from united front of 32 unions, barred from stage', *The Indian Express*, February 7, 2021.

Jaffrelot, Christophe and Gilles Verniers 'A new party system or a new political system?', *Contemporary South Asia*, 28, no. 2: 141-154, DOI: 10.1080/09584935.2020.1765990

Kamal, Neel. 'How BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) outdid many other farm outfits in Punjab', *The Times of India*, February 10, 2021.

Kumar, Ashutosh. 'Shiromani Akali Dal (1920-2020): Ideology, strategy, and support base', *Sikh Formations* 17, no. 1-2 (2021). DOI: 10.1080/17448727.2021.1873654.

Kumar, Pramod. 'Farmers' protest questions reform that promotes efficiency of agriculture, not well-being of agriculturists', *The Indian Express*, December 8, 2020.

Kumar, Pramod. 'The farmers' protest began a year ago. How has it lasted this long?', *The Indian Express*, June 23, 2021.

Menon, Aditya. 'Khalistanis Have Infiltrated Farmers' Protest, Says Modi Government', *The Quint*, June 17, 2021.

Mukherji, Partha Nath. 'The Farmers' Movement in Punjab: Politics of Pressure Groups and Pressure of Party Politics', *EPW* 33, no. 18 (May 2-8, 1998):1043-1048.

Narayanan, Sudha. 'TIF-The Farm Bills', *The India Forum*, October 2, 2020.

Pani, Narendra. 'Farm Bills and the PDS Conundrum', *The Hindu Business Line*, November 3, 2020.
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/farm-bills-and-the-pds-conundrum/article33015693.ece>

Pattenden, Jonathan and Gaurav Bansal. 'A New Class Alliance in the Indian Countryside? From New Farmers' Movements to the 2020 Protest Wave', *EPW* 56, no. 26-27 (June 26, 2021). <https://www.epw.in/journal/2021/26-27/review-rural-affairs/new-class-alliance-indian-countryside.html>.

Saikia, Arunabh. 'Punjab Ground Report: Six Months on, farm protest remains strong - and united. Where is it headed?', *Scroll.in*, February 25, 2021.

Sehgal, Manjeet. 'Know about Kisan unions leading the biggest farmers' agitation in Delhi in 30 years', *India Today*, December 3, 2020.

Scroll Staff. 'Congress wins 6 of 8 municipal corporations in Punjab local body polls; Mohali results tomorrow', *Scroll.in*, February 17, 2021.

Singh, Kehar. *Farmers' Movement and Pressure Group Politics*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1990.

Singh, Pukhraj. 'The Farm Law Protests Could Whitewash the Blatant Inequality of Rural Punjab', *The Wire*, December 5, 2020.

Singh, Prabhjit. 'Jubilation at Singhu border as farmers celebrate BJP's defeat in West Bengal elections', *Caravan Magazine*, May 3, 2021.

Singh, Prabhjit. 'In the farm laws protests, are Punjab's landless peasants getting left behind?', *Caravan Magazine*, March 22, 2021.

Singh, Prabhjot. 'When Chandigarh had a Kisan Nagar', *The Tribune*, December 10, 2020.

Singh, Pritam. 'Growing Separatist Trend', *EPW*, 19, no. 5 (February 4, 1984): 195-196.

Singh, Sandeep. "'We are One': Why Punjab's Landless Dalits are Standing with Protesting Farmers", *The Wire*, January 7, 2021.

Sinha, Shreya. 'TIF-The Agrarian Crisis in Punjab and the Making of the Anti-Farm Protests', *The India Forum*, December 4, 2020.

Thukral, Gobind. 'Punjab farmers block governor's residence to press for their demands', *India Today*, April 15, 2014.

Vijayakumar, DK and Prabhjit Singh. 'In photos: Over a lakh farmers, labourers pledge unity at Mazdoor Kisan Ekta Maha rally at Barnala', *Caravan Magazine*, February 21, 2021.

Waghre, Prateek. 'Radically Networked Societies: The case of the farmers' protests in India', *Indian Public Policy Review* 2, no. 3 (2021): 41-64.

Weaver, Mary Anne. 'Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab show rare unity in protest over wheat', *Christian Science Monitor*, May 30, 1984.

Yadav, Anumeha. 'Why landless and marginal farmers are the backbone of farmer protests', *Newslaundry*, December 4, 2020.