

Tohid Ahmad*Khola Cheema**

REORIENTATION OF PEASANT POLITICS IN COLONIAL PUNJAB AND FORMATION OF KIRTI
KISSAN PARTY (KKP)***

In the 20th century the revolutionary movements started in colonial Punjab. That was the era of militant nationalism in Punjab. Militant nationalists and socialist revolutionaries both were collectively working for the freedom. In 1914 Punjabi Diasporas formulate a Ghadar Party. This Party was dissolved in 1918. After the end of this Party comrade came back to Punjab and started revolutionary activities. At that time militant nationalist and socialist were united on a one-point agenda that was complete independence. Those comrades started the Kirti magazine, through this magazine they highlighted different issues of lower classes specially peasant and labour class worldwide. Interestingly, this magazine became the root of emergence of a political party Kirti Kissan Party(KKP). It was only party which came into being on the popular demand of the masses. this party was a secular party headed by the commoners. This paper will explore formation of the party, its structure, leadership, manifesto and development.

In twentieth century, the revolutionary movements started in the whole world. after the failure of Ghadar movement, the Ghadarites who came back to India became the members of Babbar Akil Jatha¹ and became the factor to establish communist cells. Secondly, the Hijrat movement² in 1920 which was started after the Khilafat movement this was the offshoot of Khilafat was also a great factor in organizing different communist cells in Punjab.

Activists who were involved in the Hijrat Movement met with communist at Afghanistan and they were very impressed with the idea of communism. Members of Hijrat movements were against the foreign rulers in India they also wanted to liberate their country. They want to adopt the idea of non-violence and non-cooperation to eliminate the foreign rule. The idea of socialist revolutionaries was very impressive for the Hijrat movement activists. They wanted to study the theory of communism and also wanted training of armed struggle. For this purpose, the Punjabi communist group of Afghanistan referred these youngsters to Communist militant school at Tashkent. They were warmly welcome in Tashkent. In this institution *Mahjarin* received military and political training. Tashkent school was close in 1921 after the decision of the Soviet Union that government changed its policy to involve directly in the politics of any country. That's why this school was closed and all the Mahajir transferred from Tashkent to Moscow. In Moscow they received advance level training in the Communist University of Toilers of the East. Meanwhile, the contemporary leadership of Russia was not principally hostile to nationalist communism; the University was supporting the alliance of Islamic thoughts, nationalism and Marxism³. Among these were three who were to play an active role in the left movement in the Punjab: Ferozuddin Mansoor, M.A.

* Dr. Tohid Ahmad did his PhD from University of Punjab, Lahore. He is working in Department of Pakistan Studies, GCUF.

** Dr. Khola Cheema is President and Founder of Lyallpur Young Historians Club-LYHC.

***This Paper is a part of my Ph. D Thesis titled Refocusing on Leftist Politics in Colonial Punjab: A Case Study of Kirti Kissan Party, under ID 1480460221. According to HEC Guidelines, if similarity of a report is from author's own work (previous) then this may be ignored only if the material has been sighted by author. Reference to plagiarism report dated 22-12-20 by Chief Librarian, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

¹ Babbar Akali Jatha was established in 1922. This was a group of militant Sikhs who were members of akali movement previously. Jatha was consisting of dissatisfied soldiers who were fought for the British Raj in world war I. but after war government did not fulfill their promises. Babbar Akali also published a newspaper. This movement declared illegal by the British Government in 1923.

² Hijrat Movement was started against the British government. This movement was started to restoration of Ottoman Empire. Indian Muslims were fought for British government on this promise that no harm would be done to the ottoman caliphate. After the defeat of Germany British government broken the promise and divided turkey. Hijrat Movement was the part of Khilafat Movement.

³ <https://www.ayk.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/QURESSHI-Naeem-THE-RUSSIAN-CONNECTION-OF-THE-INDIAN-MUHAJIRIN-1920-1924.pdf>

Majid and Fazal Ilahi Qurban. When members of this group tried to return to India, they had been detained and trialed in a series of conspiracy cases of Peshawar, between 1921 and 1924.

Another gathering rose in Lahore in 1922 from inside the nation as a feature of the endeavors of M.N. Roy and others to set up socialist gatherings in different urban areas. Ghulam Hussain, Shamsuddin Hassan and M.A. Khan shaped this gathering and even drew out a diary in Urdu called Inquilab for quite a while, which generally recreated M.N. Roy's works. The Kabul Center of the CPI was in contact with this group and even helped them monetarily.

Santokh Singh returned to India in 1923. He was arrested in Peshawar by the British police. He was restricted to his village Dhardeo in Amritsar. In 1925 Santokh Singh started his political activism. Toward the end of those two years, he moved to Amritsar and, alongside different individuals from the Ghadar Party, for example, Bhag Singh Canadian and Karam Singh Cheema began the Kirti, a month to month paper in Gurumukhi and Urdu, in February 1926. The Kirti movement was started against the imperialist government of British. Number of Punjabis especially Sikhs and Muslims were working for Kirti in India and certain foreign countries particularly America, China and Afghanistan. Story was actually started in 1923 during the Akali troubles, when proposals were discussed for the formation of secret societies for revolutionary work, for the fomentation of trouble on the north-west frontier, for the institution of a campaign of terrorism and assassination of British officials, and for the dispatch of educated young men to foreign countries to be trained in military schools. For the most part their proposal came from nothing, though one Sikh was sent to the military school at Constantinople and five more to Bolshevik propaganda school at Tashkent.

In January 1926 the Kirti group started to issue a monthly magazine called the Kirti, which has been persistently revolutionary in tone. Funds for this magazine have come from abroad; Bhag Singh Canadian was the main sponsor of this magazine. Kirti was printed in Gurumukhi first and became very popular in abroad. The whole trend of the magazine was communistic and anti-British imperialism, and it advocated the organization of workers and peasants for the overthrow of capitalism and attainment of independence. Besides advocating revolutionary doctrines in this way in the press, Kirti group have lain in the direction of organizing Kirti Kissan Party in the Punjab and other socialist organization i.e. Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha.

Santokh Singh started his political activism in Punjab in 1926. First volume of Kirti magazine was published from Amritsar. Kirti was a representative of working-class and working on the Marxist lines. Magazine was used as a propaganda tool of socialism and organizer of the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants. It discussed the different socialist movements and idea of socialism. It popularized the achievements of the socialist revolution in Russia. Kirti also discusses the idea of complete independence with the socialist revolution. After Santokh Singh, Sohan Singh Josh edited the paper from 13 January 1927 to 20th March 1929⁴. Feroze Din Mansoor edited Kirti after Josh because Josh was arrested in Meerut Conspiracy. Different revolutionaries work as editor of this magazine Bhagat Singh had also written a different article in Kirti. Kirti Magazine was working as a motivational force in colonial Punjab to organizing different socialist groups and formation of political parties.

Naujawan Bharat Sabha also re-organized by editor board of Kirti. NBS was organized in 1928. NBS was organized by the students of National College Lahore but after some time this organization was banned by the British government. This organization was reorganized by the Bhagat Singh and Sohan Singh Josh in 1928. Josh also wrote a book on this meeting. They decided to reorganize NBS in this meeting the manifesto of the organization was,

“(1) To establish a completely independent republic of worker and peasant of whole India. (2) To infuse the spirit of patriotism into the hearts of the youth of the country in order to establish a united Indian nation. (3) To express sympathy with, and to assist the economic industrial and social movements, which while being free from communal sentiments, are intended to take us our ideal namely the establishment of a completely independent republic of laborers and peasants. (4) To organize laborers and peasants.”⁵

In their manifesto NBS focus on four major things. They demanded complete independence and want to make a socialist state. After the independence of India or they want to liberate their motherland with socialist

⁴ Master Hari Singh, Punjab Peasant in Freedom struggle, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1984, p. 166.

⁵ Ibid, p.167

revolution. This revolution made the socialist republic of workers and peasants. According to the manifesto of Nau Jawan Bharat Sabah.

Secondly, their targeted audience was young people as their name was also shown. They want to politically sensitize the youth of India. NBS was a secular group they want to motivate their youngsters to struggle for the united India and discourage every type of division on the name of religion, caste, race and sect. they want to motivate their young comrades to love with their land and people with any discrimination and this was the only way to win independence otherwise British divided the people of India on the name of religion or cast and rule on India.

Thirdly in this meeting comrades decided to work with those organizations that were near to the ideology of NBS. NBS work with different Marxist labor fronts, trade unions, peasants' union, women unions and student unions. On the other hand, they also extended their sympathies for those political parties who were working for a socialist state.

Fourth NBS members work to organize different other labor fronts and kisan committees.

NBS open indifferent cities of Punjab with the help of Kirti management team. NBS took very active and impressive part in boycott of Simon Commission¹. They also published different type of articles which were in the support of socialism and completely rejected the British imperialism. According to the secret reports of British intelligence in India.

Kirti magazine team wanted to organize the Kirti Sabha also. They were doing very hard work to make it possible. Before the formation of Kirti Party Kirti team organize several conferences on the problems of peasants and workers. On 12 April 1928 a meeting was called in Jallianwala Bhag Amritsar and finally decided to organize a Party and in the same conference member of Kirti decide the objective of the Party.

The objectives of the Kirti Kissan Party were as following;

1. Resilient Party of workers and peasants needed to be formed to win the freedom for India.
2. Kirti Kissan Party should establish it in all over the India, in every district.
3. Kirti Kissan Party should extend its backing to Chinese struggle for freedom and Russian Revolution.
4. Smallholdings must be exempted from land revenue.
5. Support to 8 hour working day in factories.
6. Sympathy and solidarity with striking workers of Kanpur⁶.

First of all, the objective of the Party was to organize and establish a strong Party of the peasant and worker. Party would form Kissan committees in different parts of the Punjab and also organized trade unions and labor unions of workers in different industries.

Secondly Kirti Party was extended its branches in almost all districts of Punjab and India. Party leadership wants to organize and establish an open Party for social democracy so they want to a large membership of people in a different walk of life. Kirti Kissan Party believes in social democracy and politics through labor union, student unions, youth fronts and kissan committees. At that time it was a modern way to introduce socialism through democracy. According to the leadership of the Party, there no democracy without equal distribution of wealth.

Thirdly Party leadership set the objective of the Party to supported the people who struggle against capitalism and foreign rules. Because Party believed in socialism so they supported the Chinese struggle against capitalism and also fully support the socialist state of Russia.

In their fourth objective Party leadership decided to struggle for the small farmer and demand from government to exempt all type of taxes on smallholdings. In Punjab, the British government imposed heavy taxes on agricultural land to meet their high revenue targets. But the peasant especially small farmers could pay their taxes on their holding. This was the very high demand of the farmer at that time.

Fifth point was related to the labor class. After the Russian revolution workers got the right of 8 hours working in industry. But this right was not for the Indian laborer in Punjab and India. Kirti Party raised this point

⁶ Ibid,p.169

and decided to struggle for this right. In this way attracted a lot of laborers. In the last objective leadership extended their solidarity for the worker strike of Kanpur.

This meeting was the initiative of Sohan Singh Josh and Bhag Singh Canadian. Cabinet of the Party was decided in this meeting and Sohan Singh Josh⁷ became Secretary and M. A Majid⁸ became Joint Secretary of the Party. Around sixty comrades came in this meeting and all were considered the member of the Party. Prominent name of this meeting was Keder Nath Sehgal⁹, Dr Satypal¹⁰, Feroze-ud-Din Mansoor¹¹ and Master Kabul Singh. In this meeting they decided the name of Party as Kirti Kisan Party. According to the secret report of intelligence bureau of India the purpose of the KKP was;

There is not the slightest doubt that the primary objective of the worker and peasant parties is to foment strikes and demonstrations, to make the working classes discontented, and to encourage revolutionary doctrines for the overthrow of imperialism.

The second meeting or conference of Kirti Kissan Party was held in the city of Lyallpur. In this meeting, KKP leaders discuss the poor economic conditions of the peasants and the role of the British government to create this type of crisis. Lyallpur conference was very successful and large number of people attended this conference.

Third meeting of the Kirti Kissan Party took place in Rohtak on 10th day of March, 1929 in this meeting Jawaharlal Nehru especially participated and gave a speech on this occasion¹². This was first written by Director of intelligence bureau in March 1928. After the remarking that the place of the Communist Party of India had been taken by the worker and peasant parties, he said, the schemers of Moscow have been converted to Roy's view that peaceful penetration of trade union movement in India by so-called worker's and peasant Party is the most likely method of ensuring the ultimate success of Moscow's plans for bringing about an upheaval among the masses of India. According to the British secret reports KKP also got financial support from Russia and the British Communist Party. This chart was developed by the secret agencies of British to understand the influence and fund of KKP.

⁷ Sohan Singh Josh was born in 12 November 1898 in Amritsar district. Name of the village was Chetanpura. In 1921 he was an active member of Akali movement. Josh was the leader of Kirti Kissan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha. He was arrested due to Meerut Conspiracy Case.

⁸ Mir Abdul Majid belong from Lahore. He joined Khilafat Movement. In Hirjat Movement he visited Afghanistan and met with communist revolutionaries he was impressed by the communist ideas. Then he visited Russia to get training of armed struggle. On his return he sentenced to one-year imprisonment. He was the founder member of Kirti Kissan Party.

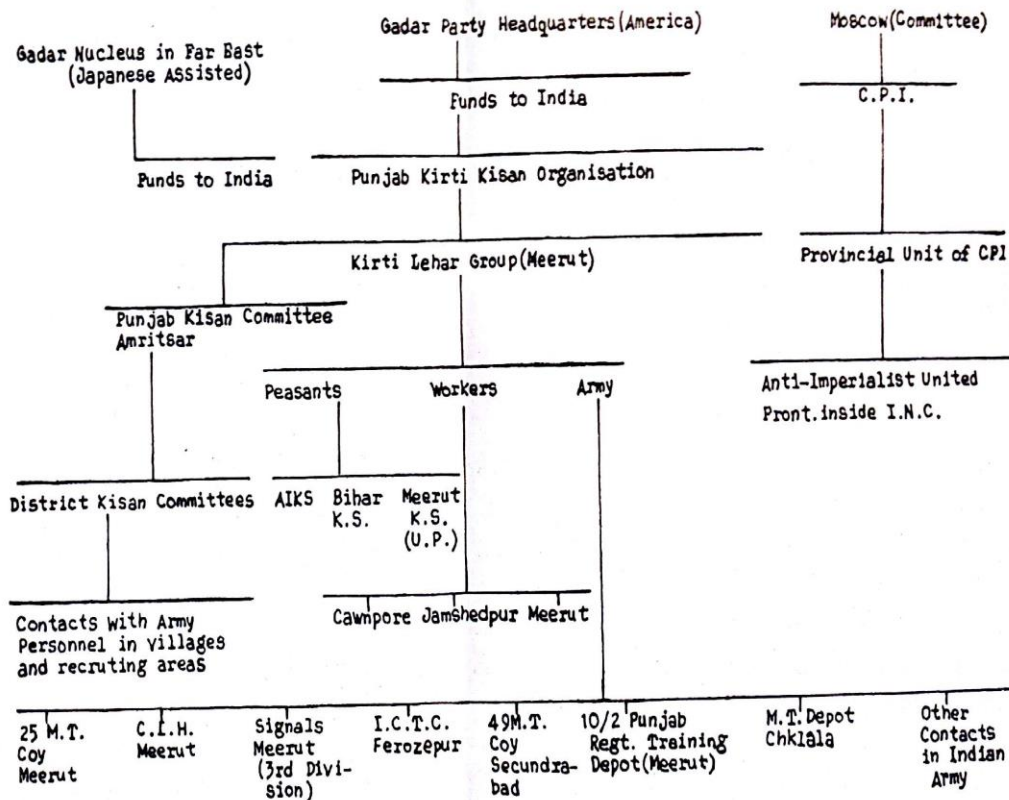
⁹ Keder Nath Sehgal was the President of Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha. He was also member of All India Congress Committee.

¹⁰ Dr. Satyapal, aged 33, was a B.A., M.B. of Punjab University and had held the Viceroy's Commission as a Lieutenant in the Indian Medical Service. Dr. Satyapal was renowned national leaders of the city of Amritsar.

¹¹ He was the leader of Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Kirti Kissan Party. He was got communist education from Moscow and return to Punjab.

¹² Meerut Conspiracy Case, LP/ &J/12/325, p. 86

Skeleton plan showing Kirti and Communist Influences(1937-1940)



Source: Home Department, Political(1), Pile No. 216, 1940.

Source: Home Department, Political (1), file No. 216, 1940.

Kirti Kissan parties developed not even in Punjab also in the other part of India. These parties first came into prominence in India early in 1927, and the impetus to their formation was given by the visits and speeches of Saklatvala and Allison, while Spratt has been the main organizer of their subsequent development¹³. Shapurji Saklatvala¹⁴ was the member of British parliament from the Communist Party of Britain. The most prominent parties were in three provinces, Bengal, Bombay and Punjab. Bengal Party was formed on March 1927 before Kirti Kissan Party. According to the intelligence report they started as groups in the various provinces, notably in Bombay, Bengal and the Punjab¹⁵. In January 1927, workers and peasant Party was formulated. The D.R. Thengdi¹⁶ was

¹³ Meerut Conspiracy Case, LP/ &J/12/325, p. 89

¹⁴ Shapurji Saklatvala was born in Bombay India. He was Indian British politician. His family was very rich he came to England due to his health issues. He entered in the politics and elected as Member of Parliament from communist party of England. He was third Indian and second member of communist party to become of parliament. A strong and well known communist speaker, he was much respected politician in Britain.

¹⁵ Meerut Conspiracy Case, LP/ &J/12/325, p. 89

¹⁶ Executive member, and president in 1923, All India Trade Union Congress, and elected delegate to the World Congress of the League Against Imperialism; President Kirkee Arsenal Workers Union, Poona; member All India Congress Committee; one of the early pioneers of the Indian Trade Union Movement; a veteran Nationalist.

elected for the presidency and S. Mirajka¹⁷ was elected as secretary and some other labor leaders elected as executive committee.

In this meeting Philip Spratt also attended this meeting. Worker and peasant Party of Bombay started working on the trade unions. With the help of Spratt and Bradley, they made Bombay trade Council. This council was working as the central body of the trade unions of Bombay. They then set out with some success to bring existing trade unions under the control of their central council, and to form new unions which, being of their own creation, automatically came their control.¹⁸ Party decides to work in trade unions and help the trade unions to organized strikes. Spratt wrote the vision of the Party in his writings.

This, then, is the general policies and functions of the Party. Every strike, every struggle of the oppressed peasants against landowners or government must receive its support and assistance. The full implications of these struggles, which are but skirmishes preparatory for the great struggle for power between the exploiters and exploited, must be brought out demonstrated to the masses¹⁹.

Workers and peasants Party Bombay also started Party organ *Karaniti* a newspaper in Marathi language. Another WPP was established at Bengal in 1926. WPP Bengal was evolved from the Swaraj Party. Comrades from Swaraj Party develop WPP. With the financial help of Saklatvala. Kirti Kissan Party announces their Party program.

It was proclaimed that the colonial rule of the British in India had not been conducted according to the desires of the masses of Britain. The British did nothing to improve the circumstance or state of the peasant and worker and people of lower and middle sections of the society. The latter charge was also made against the Indian national congress. The program stated that there were no laws to safeguard the interests of the workers, and the masses were being exploited, it was necessary, therefore, to formulate a radical organization for the workers and for the lower middle factions, who should be part of the Indian national congress and urge their claims via that organization. They should establish labor and peasant organizations and firmly posed resistance against the British Raj for their rights. The manipulation of the peasant and working-class would never come to an end up until a centralized democracy came into being in India by replacing the colonial rule.

Kirti Party was also passed some immediate demands for the Indians. These demands were written under heading of Immediate Demands.

1. Appeared women's discrimination
2. The elimination of racism and caste system distinctions
3. The liberty of the media
4. Reorganization of the trade unionists
5. Eradicating unforeseen taxes
6. Nationalizing of property
7. The formation of co-operative banking system
8. Better footings for the farmers who do borrow from moneylenders
9. Agrarian line of work should be scientific and technical shapes
10. A workers' working hours should be eight hours a day and 5 ½ days a week
11. Pays of industrial unit and mill hands should be stable by the law at the percentage of thirty-three above the living wages
12. To focus on to educate people, regulations should be made on workers' advantage and contrary to the hiring of female and child in risky labor.

These were the demands of the wwp. Party also decided the relationship with for the other organization which was working for the revolution and independence.

¹⁷Secretary British India Steam Navigation Co Staff Union; Secretary Bombay Workers and Peasants Party; candidate in the recent Municipal Elections in Bombay.

¹⁸ Meerut Conspiracy Case, LP/ &J/12/325, p. 89

¹⁹ Ibid.,96

As it is necessary to have full national independence for India free from the control of British imperialism in order to effect the above resolution, the Bengal Workers and Peasants' Association will unfailingly work in harmony with all other association which favor, and are working for, the program outlined above. According to their Party program and socialist vision, Kirti Kissan Party was successfully formed almost nine labor unions.

In 1928 Party organizing sea man labor union and transporter labor unions. According to Party leadership, these type of labor would very helpful pressurize the government and suspending the business activity. Intelligence Bureau reported that WWP Bengal decided to make efforts to gain control over the Indian Seamen Union and railway and factory workers, the objective being a general transport strike, which would achieve mass revolution²⁰.

Party was successfully developed its roots in trade unions and Kissan committees. Party issued the pamphlet A call to action. In this pamphlet Party discuss the problems of the peasants.

Almost the most important problem which the masses will have to solve is the agrarian question, the relation of the cultivator to the soil on which they work on a solution can be satisfactory unless the central question of ownership of land is decided; against the reactionary system of partition of land among a few big owner with arbitrary powers of expulsion and exploitation; for the principle of land for the cultivator himself²¹.

In this pamphlet Party also discuss the relationship with other organization with India and overseas.

“The Party must also-carry on propaganda in relation to international affairs. The league against imperialism must be supported, and its propaganda for the alliance of the reflationary labor movement and the colonial revolutionary movements be assisted. Solidarity must be encouraged with the Russian and Chinese revolutions particularly in view of the danger of war, especially among the peasants, who supply the soldiers, and among the workers, who supply the materials and transport”²².

This was a comprehensive document on the different issues. Party discussed almost all problems which were related to the people of India. Party clear its view and politics regarding youth.

“There must be established an independent youth organization which shall have, as its main functions, to draw the youth into the political struggle, and to broaden the social basis of the traditional youth body by engaging working-class and peasant youth”²³.

Workers and peasant Party also extend its solidarity for the other organization which were involved in abolishing imperialism

This conference welcomed the formation of the league against imperialism and approves of its work for the alliance of the revolutionary working class of the imperialist countries and the revolutionary nationalist movements in the subject countries. It urges the formation of a Centre for conducting the proscription of the publications of the league by government.²⁴

In 1928 Kirti Kissan Party was formulated in Punjab. Party introduced the communist slogan “land for the peasant and bread for the worker”. Party posters were made on the communist lines. Poster was issued portraying a man holding a red flag (with Bolshevik hammer and sickle) over a mass representing the old system, while another man armed with a hammer is breaking it to pieces. Kirti Kissan Party became one of the larger Party of left.

Kirti Kissan Party was formed in Punjab on socialist lines. KKP was also found in different parts of India and Overseas but with the name of workers and Peasant Party. Kirti Kissan is Punjabi translation of Workers and peasant and in non-Punjabi areas this Party called worker and peasant Party. A lot of conspiracies behind the formation of this Party but according to the secret reports of British intelligence;

²⁰ Ibid,

²¹ Meerut Conspiracy Case, LP/ &J/12/325, p. 96

²² ibid

²³ ibid

²⁴ Meerut Conspiracy Case, LP/ &J/12/325, p. 98

A large number of factors behind the formation of KKP.Ghadar Party which were the main source in the formation of KKP. Most of them want to establish a socialist Party in Punjab, on the other hand, masses of Punjab were also very much interested in Party formation because they were facing poor conditions of economy. Different other people movements also sensitized the Punjabis to participate in politics. Satyagraha movement, Gurdwara movement already prepared the people to raise their voice against the British. Labor and peasant class was facing a very difficult time due to heavy taxes and bad economic conditions. Comrades from Ghadar Party were also released from jail and they started again their political activities throughout colonial India and especially in Punjab. Comrades convinced people to study the Russian revolution and advocate socialism. This revolution was very attractive for the lower class. Leadership of all over the world. Santokh Singh was the main leader of the group also participated in the fourth congress of "communist International" in Russian capital Moscow. According to the intelligence bureau KKP was pro-Moscow Party. Main founding member of this Party or the idea of the Party was the idea of Moscow. MN Roy who was known leftist leader of the India was working on this project.

In Punjab comrades from Communist Party join Kirti Kissan Party. In intelligence reports this fact was discussed that place of Communist Party of India had been taken by the worker and peasants Party.

The schemers of Moscow have been converted to Roy's view that peaceful penetration of the Trade Union movement in India by the so-called workers and peasants Party is the most likely method of ensuring the ultimate success of Moscow's plans for bringing about an upheaval among the masses of India²⁵.

Not even Moscow was involved in the formulation of Kirti Kissan Party but the British Communist Party was also supporting the Party in formulation and development according to the intelligence reports. In this plan, the Communist Party of Great Britain has played an important part. British communists such as Gladding, Allison and Spratt have gone about their work thoroughness and ability which are reflected in the rapidly growing influence of the workers and peasant Party²⁶.

On the other hand, only Moscow also supported Kirti Kissan Party. According to the letter of MN Roy, Kirti Kissan Party has gained the full support of the Communist Party of India. This Communist Party was pro-Russia Party. Roy wrote in his letter that

Communists should be in the W.P.P. and by virtue of their being the conscious vanguard of the working class will be there driving force of the Party. But the WPP is distinct from the CP in that its program of democratic revolution which includes the realization of the minimum political and economic demands of the workers and peasants. Kirti Party was a social Democrat Party working through trade unions. That's why the Communist Party did not consider Kirti as a Communist Party. The CP supports this program as its minimum program. The main points in the program of the WPP are: overthrow of imperialist domination, direct or indirect establishment of a democratic state with full political rights for the workers and peasant²⁷.

Kirti Kissan Party discussed its vision regarding democracy in the Kirti magazine;

*"Communists wish to establish a real democracy, but we think that a real democracy cannot be attained under the capitalistic social system, nay; both these things are contradictory to each other. What equal right can a poor man have as compared with a rich man at present? The fact is that the Parliamentary Government is maintaining Government by capitalists alone under the pretext of public opinion, because the poor and the masses can have no control over society, but still occasions arise when Governments throw off the veil of parliamentary, constitutional or democratic Government also as was done last time in England by announcing emergency circumstances"*²⁸.

In another issue of Kirti magazine

"There can be some justification if political leaders ask people in Europe and America to act upon the systems devised by these capitalists, because those countries have constitution relating to capitalist classes and also

²⁵ Ibid,

²⁶ Ibid,

²⁷ Ibid,

²⁸ Report on 'The Development of the Communist Situation in India 1928-29', Home Political File, 18/VII K.W.XI, 1928, NAI.

*constitutional bodies of capitalists. But in a country like India where foreigners hold a sway such things amount to madness*²⁹.

Concept of revolution was according to Sohan Singh Josh and by revolution, means National Revolution, that is to say the coming about of a state of affairs by which India attains complete independence without having any connection with imperialist Britain. By revolution, I mean the confiscation of the British vested interests in India and the repudiation of the national debts. By revolution, I mean that India be the real mistress in her own house in the real sense of the phrase, controlling her own house in the real sense of the phrase, controlling her own finance, armies and navies and allowing nobody in any way whatsoever to interfere in her internal as well as external affairs. The national revolution will grow into the social revolution that is to say the revolution will grow into the social revolution that is to say revolution for the establishment of socialism leading to Communist society in India, but this second revolution will take place after the first³⁰.

Sohan Singh Josh's concept of freedom was that "Real freedom is the freedom of bread. Until it is secured no peace can be maintained. Hence, the evils of unemployment and poverty ought to be eradicated"³¹.

Sohan Singh Josh's views on the leadership of proletariat were also very unique, he said that; *"The proletariat in India occupies a vital position in the imperialist apparatus of domination. It workers in its factories and war industries. It runs its network of transport and traffic- the railway, dock, etc. in comparison with other sections of the toilers it is far more advanced, more concentrated, more disciplined and far more organized. The rapid growth of political consciousness and organization among the working class is a potential menace to imperialism. For these reason the proletariat is the potential leader of the national revolution in India"*³².

Sohan Singh Josh defined the Punjab Kirti Kissan Party's attitude toward methods of Revolution in his one of speech at the Kakori Day Celebrations;

*"Our object to change the system and not to murder individual's mass civil disobedience and mass non- tax campaign shall be launched. It is for this reason we lay emphasis on organization"*³³.

KKP had very clear views regarding armed struggle as the Party thought that one should not confuse and mix up the individual terrorism and red terrorism. The red terrorism is employed only when the state machine is captured by the proletariat and not before³⁴.

Kirti Kissan Party demanded that;

*"We are men; we shall make ourselves men and shall take a man's right from you. No laborer shall ever relinquish any of his rights. The should give them enough to live upon. Arrangement should be made for their housing and education for children.... We point out to you that improper treatment is done to the labourers, that if this not set right.... We are bound to stand erect and we do so, we will crush them and they shall not get up"*³⁵.

The statement of Sohan Singh Josh showed that the total amount from subscription and donations was more than Rs. 16000³⁶.

²⁹ J. E. Woolacott, *India on Trial* (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 80.

³⁰ MCCP, Sr.No.218, Exhibit No. P.1884 (2)(T), Sohan Singh Josh speech delivered on 18 august 1929 at Jallianwala Bagh, pp.331-2.

³¹ Ibid. exhibit No. 161, Exhibit No. P. 1906, p. 787--- copy of the speech delivered by Sohan Singh Josh on 29 November 1928 in the third session of the Lyallpur Kirti Kissan Party Conference.

³² MCCP, Sr.No.218, Exhibit No. P.324, Examination Sohan Singh Josh one of the accuse in Meerut Conspiracy case.

³³ Ibid, Sr. No. 205, Exhibition No. (1905)(T), p54- Speech of Sohan Singh Josh at the Kakori Day celebration in Jallinwala Bagh on 16 December 1928.

³⁴ Ibid., Sr. No. 218.p.344—statement of Sohan Singh Josh in the court of R.L. Yorke, Additional Session Judge, Meerut.

³⁵ MCCP, Sr. No. 161, Exhibit No. 621 (T), p. 845-6. Demands of the All India workers and Peasants Party have been summarized on the basis of the document.

³⁶ Ibid., Sr. No. 218.p.344—statement of Sohan Singh Josh in the court of R.L. Yorke, Additional Session Judge, Meerut.

Kirti Kissan Party does not accept dominion status as it considered dominion status as their creed in place of complete independence and showing criminal neglect towards the interests of peasants and workers. At the same times, it declared that nothing short of complete independence can satisfy workers and peasants³⁷.

KKP rejected the congress movement against foreign cloths. According to KKP, this movement was started by Congress to support the mill owners. The KKP leadership argues that neither wearing of *khadi* nor scrapping of machine could bring Swaraj.

The Punjab KKP owed special debt to the Ghadar group for its role in founding the monthly magazine *Kirti*, published in Punjabi, designing the pattern of its growth and guiding its policy. Expertise of Bhai Santokh Singh and Bhag Singh Canadian in Ghadar techniques of propaganda the importance of propaganda in organizing the workers and peasant based on economic principle, Bhai Santokh Singh publicized the principles of socialism created class consciousness among its readers.

The interest taken by Moscow in the existence of these parties in India was shown in the course of the discussions at the recent sixth communist congress, when doubts were expressed by some speakers as to the wisdom, as a matter of tactics, of encouraging the workers and peasant parties instead of trying to form a strong Communist Party in India. according to the British intelligence reports.

KKP became very famous within some time. Party wanted to work outside from Punjab at this point leader of KKP decide to change the name of KKP to peasant and worker Party. Party worker wanted to organize a worker and peasant conference in Calcutta. That's why comrades want to rename the Party from Kirti Kissan Party to Workers and Peasants Party. This conference was held on the 22nd of December, 1928. The conference presided over by Sohan Singh Josh. In this conference Workers and Peasants Party was set up at Calcutta.

Kirti Kissan Party's Politics in World War Second

With the start of the World War II in 1939, a new era of Kirti Kissan Party was started. This war changed not only the political scenario of the whole world but as well as of the India. Kirti Kissan activists wanted to move their activities out of the jail but they were not able to do that as British were not ready to free the Kirtis who were in prison.³⁸ The important leaders of Kirti Kissan Party who were in jail were Bhag Singh Canadian, Jawala Singh Bilga and Baba Kesar Singh.³⁹

Due to the outbreak of the World War II, it was also not possible for the KKP to publish *Kirti Lehar*. The party started a new monthly journal named *Lal Jhanda*. It was secretly published. Its first magazine came out in January 1940 and the central place of publication of Jalandhar. Although the place of publication had been changed time to time. This magazine became popular very quickly and its over two thousand copies were sold in more than fifteen districts. The content of the magazine was anti-establishment and British. This magazine's main purpose was to motivate masses for the struggle of freedom. The whole of the Punjab witnessed the posters pasted on the walls to promote the message of *Lal Jhanda*. Along with it, the zilla committees of the party published the leaflets and circulars for the party members. These circulars described briefly about the current political situation of that time as well as the party policies in that regard.⁴⁰

In the month of June, 1940, Kirti Kissan Party elected a new Polit-Bureau. Harbans Singh Karnana, and Chain Singh Chain were its members and Gurcharan Singh Sehansara was elected as its Secretary. In the General meeting of Polit-Bureau on 9th June, the members emphasized on the eternal affairs of the party and its expansion. A control commission, consisted of Achchar Singh Chheena, Ram Singh Dutt and Harinder Singh Sodhi, was also elected to lead the Polit-Bureau. But this control commission did not last very long and met to its end with the arrest of Ram Singh Dutt. Noe the new Polit-Bureau became wholly responsible to run the party.⁴¹

³⁷ *Kirti*, monthly Punjabi, *Puran Azadi*, Amritsar, February 1928, pp. 31-32.

³⁸ They were under detention under Defence of India rules Section 26.

³⁹ "Lahore Kisan Morcha Di Zabardast Goonj", *Kirti Lehar*, Aug 20, 1939, 15-16.

⁴⁰ Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle* (New Dehli: Peoples Publishing House, 1984), 205.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

This was the time when Kirti Kissan Party realized that self-rule is the only solution. Now their motto was to put an end to the British rule. To achieve this goal, the party workers were very conscious of it and were very well prepared. The Kirti Kissan party conducted almost one hundred and ten study circles to spread political awareness among its workers. Each and every study circle was a week long and many topics were discussed including but not limited to Marxism and its beginning, national as well as international politics, party unity and class unity and imperialists war. All these study circles were conducted very secretly and almost six hundred and eighty political activists and party workers participated in these circles. It was also necessary for the Party ideologues to attend a political school before lecturing study circle so that they are well prepared.⁴²

The Kirti Kissan Party promoted that Indians should exploit and use the war situation for their own benefit and to achieve the independence from the foreign rulers. Kirtis were not the believers of 'Ahnsa' or non-violence and they wanted to overthrow the existing British Government by armed struggle. They wanted to establish a socialist form of government in India. Kirti Kissan Party had Zilla committees in Sheikhpura, Jalandhar, Lyallpur, Amritsar, Ferozpur, Montgomery, Ludhiana and Gurdaspur. These Zilla committees run the affairs of the party through district committees and some cells. The main goal of these committees was to spread awareness and promote anti-government sentiments.⁴³ Their subversive activities were meant to interfere with the efficient execution of the war. On 15 August 1940, police started crackdown against the Kirti Kissan Party and its sympathizers. The police arrested almost more than one hundred party members and around two hundred and fifty party sympathizers. Moreover, fifty party members were in detention without any trial. The movement of ten more members was restricted to their villages and British government confiscated the property of twenty-five Kirti Kissan Party members. The police did not only arrest the members of the party who were working secretly but also put a cash reward for their arrest. All these restrictions seriously harmed the party and its members' activities.⁴⁴

This was the time when Kirti Kissan Party started focusing on the youngsters and tried to make them party members. In result, party established Punjab Students Federation. Although it did exist in various cities but was mainly active in Lahore. The prominent members of Punjab Students Federation were Latif Danial, Ramesh Chandra, Sheela Bhatia, Inder Gujral, Ramesh Charlie, Jagjit Singh Anand, Khursheed Minto, Rajbans Khanna, Randhir Singh and Satpal Dang. Kirti Kissan Party and Punjab Students Federation organized many study circles in different cities of Punjab including but not limited to Lyallpur, Lahore, Amritsar, Moga, Sarhali, Baba Bakala and Tarn Taran.⁴⁵

The Kirti Kissan Party also focused on the women participation in the party and organized women of Lahore and grouped them in a literary circle named "Adhyayansheel Mahila Ganiyatala". Shakuntla Sharda played major role to organize women in this literary circle. This literary circle later on established a women wing in Lahore in which Sushil Kumari was very active. Another prominent member of this wing was Bibi Raghbir Kaur, who was later on got arrested during the disobedience movement of All India Congress. Similarly, different women wings were working in various districts; in Gurdaspur there were three prominent women workers who played an important role in the distribution of the party literature. The women party members in Ferozpur, Amritsar and Fatehgarh participated actively in party activities as well as protests and agitations. When Kurtana Kisan Conference was held in Fatehgarh, Sushil Kumari very successfully mobilized hundreds of women to attend the conference. In 1942, a Progressive Women's Conference came into being. Progressive Women's Conference elected Bibi Raghbir Kaur as president of PWC and Sushil Kumari was elected as Secretary. It was first women party of this type and became very popular among the women folks.⁴⁶ With the great efforts of women party members, Progressive Women Conference's membership very soon crossed over two thousand and its branches were established in many districts including Kangra, Sheikhpura, Gurdaspur and Ferozpur.

In April 1941, Kirti Kissan Party made few changes in the Polit-Bureau and Dulla Singh was included in the it in place of Gurcharan Singh Sehansara. Moreover, the Chain Singh Chain became the secretary of the Polit-

⁴² Azadi Di Asli Raah Te Saade Dawaan Dol Leader, Lal Jhanda, Nov 1940. 4.

⁴³ Hindustan Par Jung Ka Najayaz Bojh, Lal Jhanda. May, 1941. 2.

⁴⁴ Hor koi Kasar Baaki Hai, Lal Jhanda. September 1940. 9.

⁴⁵ Akhir Eh Kad Tak, Lal Jhanda, November 1940, 9.

⁴⁶ Master Hari Singh, Punjab Peasants in Freedom struggle, 307.

Bureau. The party now paid attention towards strengthening of its claim of an independent body through establishing more strong relations with the Communist International.⁴⁷

When Germany attacked Russia in June 1941, Kirti Kissan Party declared Nazis and Germany their enemy. The party announced that Kirtis are fighting two enemies at time; the British imperialists and Fascist Nazis. An annual conference of Punjab Students' Federation was held in the month of November in 1941; the speakers of the conference emphasized on fighting two enemies and encouraged students to play their role to support Russia in these tough times through the destruction of British imperialism. However, soon when British joined Russia in the war, Party altered its line and adopted a new one. The Party published two documents to help Kirtis to understand the party stand. The Polit-Bureau and Communist Party of India regretted on their stance and explained the Party's position. The party leadership admitted their mistake that they hated British imperialist government blindly and didn't realized that the British are now on progressive side as they chose to fight against Nazis in support of the Russia.⁴⁸ Being part of International Communist, they emphasized on looking towards Russia as the fatherland, and for them its protection or security was the priority.

On June 25th, 1941, Kirti Kissan Party published and widely distributed a circular in which the Party look into the attack of Germany on Russia and tried to defend its stance to support the British in the war. It was demanded in the circular that as the fascist Germany became so powerful that it's very important to stop it that a united Anglo-Russian front should be made to fulfill this purpose. The party issued another circular on 8th of July 1941, in this circular the party demanded that a War Society is the need of time as well as the Indian forces should be armed. The party also demanded in this circular that due to current situation, government should set free all the political prisoners of India.⁴⁹ Although, the Kirti Kissan Party had an anti-British stance for last fourteen years and struggled against 'Imperial and war monger British', but now suddenly they retreated from this stance and became pro-British due to Germany's attack on the Russia. This attack on one hand bring the Great Britain and Russia closer to each other and on the other hand it forced the Kirti Kissan Party to retreat from their stance as the International Communism asked to all the communists to support British in their war efforts.⁵⁰

The communist leaders who were in prison in Deoli Camp agreed to this 'command' of the International Communist and started propagating accordingly. The dispersed communists followed their leaders and agreed to the party's stance. On 15th of December 1941, a resolution was passed in which it was declared that the Kirti Kissan Party is a practical party, as the situation of the national movement had changed due to the outbreak of the war so party is also evolving with the passage of time and with the changed circumstances. So with the new advancement Kirti Kissan Party also changed its slogan which would suit to the new situation. Now the Kirti Kissan Party adopted a new slogan 'make the Indian people play a people's role in the people's war'.

Though party demanded from the British government to release political prisoners as the party was now supporting the government war efforts but government did not listen to it and the communists in the prison faced a lot of difficulties. Their political rights were not safeguarded and even though they were political prisoners but they did not have the facilities of a political prisoner according to law. Most of them were stuck in very congested place without any furniture. They were treated very badly and received severe punishments for very little offence. They were not provided any utensils except a plate, not even a glass to drink water. All the newspapers, books, maps or reading material was banned. Due to this depressed situation in which they were denied even of their basic rights as political prisoners, the political prisoners of Deoli Camp started a hunger strike. In these prisoners, workers of Kirti Kissan Party, Official Communist Group, Congress Socialist Party, Left Congressmen, prominent Ghadri Babas and Babbar Akalis were included. Five prominent names from Punjab among these prisoners were Baba Rur Singh, Sohan Singh Josh, Kabul Singh, Master Hari Singh, and Harjap Singh.⁵¹

The British government also changed its attitude and policies towards communists over-nightly just like the communist's stance towards the British Imperialist government. On the 1st of May 1942, the government released the communist leaders including the high rank leaders like Sohan Singh Josh, Bhagat Singh Bilga, Teja Singh

⁴⁷ Majuda Safai Jung, Lal Jhanda, May 1941. 1.

⁴⁸ Home/Political, File No. 44-32, 1942, 74.

⁴⁹ 'Jung Di Raftaar', Lal Jhanda, Jan 1942, 10.

⁵⁰ Jung Aur Zulm-o-Tashadat Ka Saal, Lal JHanda, Dec 1941, 4.

⁵¹ Deoli Camp Ke Siasi Bandon Ki Haalat, Lal Jhanda, March 1941, 9.

Swatantar, Karam Singh Mann, Achchar Singh Chheena, Iqbal Singh Hundal, Fazal Ilahi Qurban and Feroz-ud-Din Mansoor. Later on 24th of July 1942, the British government also put an end to the ban on the Communist Party of India. Now, the Communist Party of India was recognized by government and became a legal political party which do have the favor of the Imperialist government.⁵²

The Kirti's used to focus on to spread the anti-British and nationalistic view point among Indian army. But now the new party line of people's war which was in the favor of British created a paradoxical state of affairs. The number of the army men who were leaving the army was on a constant rise. It was so high that on the provincial level the number was sixteen hundred in January 1942 which rose to four thousand in June 1942, with in few months. Until, the end of June 1942, more than fifteen thousand soldiers abandoned their army jobs. This presented the golden opportunity which was always dreamed by Kirtis to free their nation from the Imperialists but oddly enough when the opportunity came, the Kirtis were on the other side and were motivating people to join the army and find for British.⁵³

On 16th of July 1941, the Kirti Suba Committee decided to merge the Kirti Kissan Party into Communist Party of India. Strangely, this merger happened on the basis of 'full faith' and 'mutual trust', the Kirti Kissan Party did not lay any terms and conditions. this decision was approved by the Kirti rank and file. The Kirti Kissan Party sent the request to Communist Party of India but for a long time, the party got no reply. In the end of the month of December 1941, the party sent Harminder Singh Sodhi to Bombay to ask the Communist Party of India to give a reply to their request. But the central committee of C.P.I advised them that the Kirtis should sustain their distinct identity as well as continue its newspaper. The Communist Party of India also recommended that they would work in unity with the Kirti Kissan Party on public fronts. After receiving this answer from Communist Party of India, the Kirti Kissan Party sent another resolution to the Central Committee to stress them to acknowledge their request but Harminder Singh Sodhi got arrested on his way to the Bombay. Now, Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri went to the Bombay with the resolution. Now, the Central Committee of Communist Party of India accepted the request of merger of Kirti Kissan Party into Communist Party of India and made the arrangements. In March 1942, the Organizational Unity Committee was established. The Kirti Kissan Party dissolved its identity unconditionally.⁵⁴ The stage for this merger or unity among Kirti Kissan Party and Communist Party of India was set however in Deoli Camp where communists of all factions came closer to each other and felt that there should be a united communist front to achieve the goals which were similar. And finally with the efforts of the Kirtis who were not in jail, it happened.

Concluding Remarks

In Twentieth-Century, many peasants and labor movements were started in Punjab. The Peasant and Worker Movements are generally started in the wake of economic crisis; the same was the case with Punjab. When British Raj extracted more and more taxes from the farmers to defray war expenditures during great wars, their condition worsened so they launched the movements for the protection of their rights and to protest against the cruel policies. Kirti Kissan Party emerged from that resistance movements and was a joint effort of the suppressed peasantry, war veterans who served British Raj and returned empty-handed, the Ghadarites who wanted to liberate their homeland, and the Communists who wanted to fight for the rights of the farmers and laborers. Kirti Kissan Party was a small party in the start but became popular after the Meerut Conspiracy Case.

The first step was the publication of the monthly magazine *Kirti*. The party held many conferences and also organized nine labor unions including the seamen labor union, railway union, factory workers' union and other. Although the Kirti Kissan Party was working for the rights of peasants and workers but its ultimate goal was to liberate the homeland.

⁵² Master Hari Singh, Punjab Peasants, 302.

⁵³ Home/Political, File No. 18/10, 1942, 47.

⁵⁴ Master Hari Singh, Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, 294.