

Punjab Crisis : Why ? Whither

PRAMOD KUMAR, MANMOHAN SHARMA,
ATUL SOOD, ASHWANI HANDA

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An attempt to comprehend the character of the economic and political demands, formally encapsulated in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, amply brings out the glaring opposition between (i) the slogan of reduction of inequalities and improvement in the lot of the poor and the oppressed and (ii) the actual interests that are aimed to be served by the various demands. The programme's demands have several implications. These can be briefly stated as follows:

The demands for cheap inputs and modernization in agriculture will largely serve the interests of the middle and rich farmers, since technological innovations are scale biased.

The removal of restrictions on the movement of foodgrains, implied by the demand for India to be considered a single food zone, will benefit those possessing surpluses for sale and having access to those resources which will enable them to store and transport their crops from one area to another and fetch higher prices for them. This lucrative opportunity can, therefore, only be possibly availed of by the middle and, more so, by the big farmer. Another demand states that agricultural prices should be fixed on the basis of the costs of production of the middle farmer. The middle farmer would certainly be benefited by this proposition. However, both in relative and absolute terms, the greater benefits would accrue to the big farmers. This is so because their per-acre input expenditure is lower and they have a larger marketable surplus.

The demand for higher remunerative prices of agricultural produce would ensure returns to those who have a marketable surplus. It would bring stability to the returns of small farmers, but it is the rich and middle farmers having a large marketable surplus who would capitalize on this measure by way of increased net profits.

Moreover, such a movement in prices would be severely disadvantageous to poor consumers¹, including non-cultivating landless labourers and petty and marginal farmers, all of whom spend the greater portion of their income on food. Such a demand would be at variance with the proclaimed slogan of upliftment of the poor.

The resolution also asks for higher prices for cash crops and that the purchase of cotton should be facilitated through the setting up of a cotton corporation. This demand stems from the fact that not only have the prices for wheat and rice been stable in the past but also that price trends have been favourable since the setting up of the FCI while the prices of cash crops have been fluctuating. Besides, data show that in the category of

¹ Note that coupled with this is the fact that the commodity terms of trade have been more favourable to agriculture.

farm size greater than 12.5 acres it is cotton, next to wheat, which forms the highest percentage share of cropped area. In farms of small sizes maize, wheat and rice are the main crops produced. Clearly this demand seeks to promote interests of the richer farmers.

None of these demands ensures the welfare of the poor and the oppressed. The economic policy resolution proclaims that greater per-capita income and increase in growth rates will lead to such welfare. Unfortunately, such indicators by no means ensure distributive justice. The economic policy resolution shows evidence of a discriminatory stand in relation to the agricultural and industrial sectors. It argues for the nationalization of all industry with the exception of agro-based industries, while it does not argue the same for agriculture. It proposes to give priority to agro-based industries, which may well benefit the rich farmers both through linkage effects and by opening opportunities for investing their surplus. Moreover, it emphasizes credit facilities for medium-scale industries. The rural rich, constrained from investing in large-scale industry by various factors like entrepreneurship, competition from the national bourgeoisie for market, etc., would benefit from the development of investment possibilities in medium-scale industries. The resolution is further markedly discriminatory in its demand that industrial workers should be given need-based wages and a proper share in the profits. It is, however, ambiguous regarding the workers' agrarian counterparts and merely states that the wages of agricultural workers should be reassessed as and when required.

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution further demands that the country's Constitution should be made federal. This policy statement envisages the retention of only four subjects – Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications and Currency – by the Central Government, leaving the other subjects to the States. The 18th All-India Akali Conference held at Ludhiana in October 1978 demanded greater autonomy for all States without specifying the nature of this autonomy. To look into the Centre-State relationship the Union Government has already appointed the Sarkaria Commission.

The question of Centre-State relations is not merely a Constitutional but also a political question, because the existing Constitutional arrangement has been replaced by extra-constitutional centres of power. The emergence of such centres of power cannot merely be attributed to individuals or groups. The emerging class of capitalist farmers in Punjab perceives a clash of interests with those of the big industrialists outside Punjab. The latter are seen to exercise control over industrial licensing (under the Act of 1951 powers to give industrial licenses is vested with the Central Government) and a total control over market and political power. The controls and clearances for capital issues, for the import of capital goods and raw materials and for foreign collaboration, besides industrial financing institutions such as the IDBI and the IFCI, are under Central control. Consequentially the demand for greater autonomy. Further, the concentration of power in being individuals ineffective and incapable of resolving or accommodating conflicts which have their basis in emerging interest groups. This has, in the context of Punjab, given a new form to the problem of Centre-State relations, inter-State relations and decentralization of power at the grass-roots level.

The Constitution of India permits as much reorganization of constituent States as possible, but it comes down heavily on separatism or secession. Naturally, therefore, it provides for the elimination of all such demands based on narrow, parochial, religious and other such considerations. It is necessary to emphasise that a distinction must be seen between the demand for "Khalistan" and the need for more State autonomy so as to allow the federal feature of our Constitution to wake up to life. However, it is relevant to caution that political mobilization for State autonomy and other secular demands must not be based upon or use caste, religion

and other such cleavages. Political mobilization must take place to promote secularism, the scientific temper, democratic consciousness and a progressive culture. If the political groups cannot promote such values then the State has to tolerate retrogressive eventualities like communalism.

Some of the religious demands such as the proposed enactment of all All-India Gurdwara Act and the relay of Gurbani from the Golden Temple by AIR implicitly contradict the preamble to the Constitution, which resolves to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic.² The Constitution ensures protection to all religions but is not meant to *promote* any of them. Moreover, Article 51 (A) says that it shall be the duty of every citizen to develop the scientific temper. The development of the scientific temper involves accepting the method of science for acquiring knowledge and recognizing that a scientific attitude dispels dogmas, superstition and obscurantism, which, essentially, are propagated in the name of religion. The acceptance of these demands, therefore, would be tantamount to the promotion of religions.

Article 26 (B) of the Constitution stipulates that the state cannot interfere in the exercise of the right of religious organisations to manage their own affairs in matters “of religion”, unless they run counter to public order, health or morality. It is through invoking moral-cum-religious authority that religious institutions should administer their religious affairs rather than through drawing sanction from Parliament, which is constitutionally committed to secularism. Evidently such demands are raised for achieving economic and political gains, rather than for aiming at spiritual excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity. Demands of a similar nature could be raised by other communal groups, political parties or religious institutions. Such a situation will result in the strengthening of communal attitudes. Acceptance of religious demands raised by the communalists will further aggravate the problem, for individual groups will coin new demands of a similar nature in order to protect and promote their economic and political interests. For instance, in January 1984, the Akali Dal (L) raised the demand for the amendment of Article 25 of the Constitution. Article 25 (2) reads as follows:

(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the state from making any law-

(a) Regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other activity which may be associated with religious practices;
providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Explanation I: The wearing and carrying of Kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II: In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religions, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

The Akali Dal (L) objected to the inclusion of persons professing the Sikh religion into the Hindu religion. This demand has not been raised to date by the Akali Dal (L) in any of their resolutions or demand charters. It seems that this demand has been raised vocally or in statements to the press by the Akali Dal (L)

² The word Secular was incorporated through the 42nd Amendment effective from January, 1977.

- (i) to counter the challenge and threat posed by extremists and conformist-communalists. However, it is relevant here to point out that among the conformist-communalists there are extremist communalists. Within the extremist section there are factions aligning with different communal tendencies. For instance the All-India Sikh Students Federation, the Akal Federation and the National Council of Khalistan are closer to the group led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, whereas the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and the Youth Akali Dal align with the Akali Dal (L),³
- (ii) in response to the delay in the acceptance of their other demands arising from water and territorial disputes, etc., by the party in power.

Therefore, the deadlock in the negotiations and increasing threat from the extremists and conformist-communalists may have forced the Akali Dal (L) to raise this demand. This clearly indicates that such a demand is being fabricated in order to make political capital out of it. "This kind of distorted reflection serves the interests of some social groups whose interests would not be served or might even be ill-served if the real problems of society led to politics and ideologies that were relevant to their solution" (Bipan Chandra 1984). The retention of religious groups, as a reference point because of their ideological orientation, makes it convenient for the supposedly deprived group to find scapegoats for their discontent in their perceived antagonistic religious groups. This communal ideology does not correctly represent the hidden spectrum of concrete reality. It is rooted in empirical reality rather than in hidden structures and tries to mystify the real conflicts and develop a mechanism to protect the interests of a particular class fraction stratum or group.

The issue of apportionment of waters between Punjab and Haryana is one of the main demands of the Akalis. The problem has supposedly arisen as the erstwhile State of Punjab was reorganized into the State of Haryana and the present State of Punjab in 1966. At the time of the reorganization, all assets and liabilities were apportioned between Punjab and Haryana. An examination of the historical aspect of this problem indicates that "surplus" Ravi-Beas waters became available by virtue of the Indus Water Treaty, 1960, which was signed by India and Pakistan. Under this Treaty the waters of three rivers – Satluj, Ravi and Beas – called the Eastern Rivers, were allocated to India. This was in lieu of the surrender of India's claims to the waters of the region's other three rivers – Indus, Jhelum and Chenab – called the Western

³ There are eight Sikh extremist communal groups and organisations. These are the Bhindranwale group, the All-India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, the Babbar Khalsa, the Youth Akali Dal, the National Council of Khalistan, the Dal Khalsa and the Akal Federation. Bhindranwale group is the most powerful in terms of numbers as well as influence. AISSF is the student wing of the Akali Dal and is headed by Amrik Singh. In the past one year, AISF has aligned itself with Sant Jarnail Singh and has been following his line. Amrik Singh, President, and Sandhu, Secretary of AISSF, are among the confidants of the Sant. The National Council of Khalistan is led by Balbir Singh Sandhu, Secretary-General of the banned organisation. Dal Khalsa, another banned organisation, is literally non-existent. Another militant organisation is Akal Federation. Bhai Kanwar Singh heads this group but it does not have more than half a dozen members. Like AISSF it is completely with Sant Jarnail Singh. Akhand Kirtani Jatha is led by Bibi Amarjit Kaur. Amarjit Kaur is the widow of Fauja Singh, an agriculture inspector who was killed in a clash with Nirankaris in Amritsar in April, 1978. There are about 20 members of this group and most of them are educated. Members of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha mostly organize Kirtan or voluntary service in the Golden Temple. Amarjit Kaur is believed to enjoy the confidence of the Akali Dal President, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. The Youth Akali Dal is a new organisation floated by the Shiromani Akali Dal about a year ago. The purpose of starting a new youth wing of the party was believed to be to counter. AISSF which had come under the influence of Sant Jarnail Singh. The Babbar Khalsa is an off-shoot of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, but is a purely militant organisation. Sukhdev Singh is the leader of this group.

Rivers, to Pakistan. Prior to this Treaty, an agreement amongst various States, namely Rajasthan, PEPSU, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, was reached in 1955. The apportionment of the waters was : Punjab 5.6 maf, PEPSU 1.3 maf, Rajasthan 8 maf, and Jammu and Kashmir 0.6 maf (total 15.8 maf). A number of expert committees and commissions were appointed to look into the apportionment of the “surplus” waters of the Ravi and the Beas.⁴

The basic principle involved in the sharing of waters has been primitive, in that water was mainly treated as a property and hence the claim to usage on the basis of the “as is where is” principle. The controversy stems from the principle of considering water to be “a property”, relegating the claim to water on the basis of need to a secondary and subordinate level. The application of the principle of need was used in a very limited and distorted fashion. No expert committee was appointed to consider the issue in a broader perspective. Essentially, the issue ought to be the optimum harnessing of the existing water resources. Reducing the dimensions of the problem to merely a question of apportioning, and that too without the application of scientific and rational criteria, is incommensurate with the substantial issue.

The application of the need-based principle in a limited fashion was the result of taking the existing multiple cropping pattern, or crop rotation, as permanent, without taking into consideration the possible need of water resources in the industrial sector. Unfortunately no master plan has been prepared by the governments and political parties involved in the water dispute to evaluate the current and future water needs in agriculture, in industry and for domestic and other uses. Water being a scarce resource there is a need for a comprehensive understanding and intervention to even alter the existing cropping pattern, etc., to suit the specific climate and soil conditions of the region, thereby eliminating excessive and wasteful use of scarce water.

The data reveal that while Punjab and Delhi have been utilizing more water than allocated to them, there was a balance of 0.401 maf and 0.940 maf in the general reservoir in 1980-81 and 1981-82 respectively. Moreover, it is evident that there was wastage of 1.901 maf in 1980-81 and 2.218 maf in 1981-82, of which 1.306 maf and 1.615 maf have been excluded respectively, from sharing. Also, a total of 2.498 maf was wasted and allowed to flow to Pakistan in 1981-82 and such wastage of water resources amounted to an average of 8.467 maf (from 1971-72 to 1981-82).

⁴ The problem has arisen as the erstwhile State of Punjab was reorganized into the States of Haryana and the present State of Punjab in 1966. Section 78 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966, in particular, provides for apportionment of the rights and liabilities of the Bhakra Nangal and Beas Projects. The Central Government issued an order about the apportionment of surplus Ravi-Beas waters in accordance with the provisions of Section 78 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, on March 24, 1976, whereby 3.5 maf of water was allocated to Haryana and the balance not exceeding 3.5 maf to Punjab, out of the total surplus Ravi-Beas water of 7.2 maf falling to the share of the erstwhile State of Punjab after setting aside 0.2 maf for Delhi Drinking Water Supply.

An agreement, was signed by the Chief Ministers of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan on December 31, 1981. According to this agreement for the flow series 1921-60 of the 17.17 maf, compared to the corresponding figure of 15.85 maf for the flow series 1921-45 which had formed the basis of water allocation under the 1955 decision. The Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan agreed on December 31, 1981, that the mean supply of 17.17 maf (flow and storage) be reallocated as follows: share of Punjab: 4.22 maf; share of Haryana: 3.50 maf; share of Rajasthan: 8.60 maf; quantity earmarked for Delhi Water Supply: 0.20 maf; share of J&K: 0.65 maf. Total: 17.17 maf. The Chief Ministers further agreed that until such time as Rajasthan was in a position to utilize its full share, Punjab should be free to utilize the waters surplus to Rajasthan’s requirements. Thus, during this period Punjab’s share would be 4.82 maf.

The data amply demonstrate that water has been surplus and left in balance in the reservoir or else allowed to go waste. The absence of planning to harness and utilize the water and the lack of vision and initiative to build an adequate network of canals for distribution of such water indicates that the parties embroiled in the present water dispute lack scientific research dealing with water management and that the water dispute, in its current form, is more of a political issue. It now appears to be a bogey raised by interest groups engaged in political squabbles. No doubt water is a scarce resource, but at present it is sufficiently available and is either inadequately tapped or inefficiently and unequally distributed. The water issue, as raised in its present form, has been disproportionately made an issue of "sharing".

The demand for disenfranchisement of migrant labourers has been raised by certain individuals in the Akali Dal such as Sukhjinder Singh, G.S. Tohra, SGPC President, and some members of the Akali Dal (Talwandi group). None of these leaders, however, have talked about the ouster of migrants, although a few "Khalistan" protagonists have. This demand does not form part of the demand charter submitted by the Akali Dal (L). The demand may be the result of factional politics within the Akali Dal, where a faction associated with the above-mentioned leaders seeks to win over the support of middle and small peasants and local landless agricultural labourers.

However, a survey⁵ revealed that the perception of various sections of the peasantry does not fully support this line of thinking.

The survey summarises the perception of middle peasants who feel that to the Punjabi farmer, migratory labour is indispensable. The demand for the ouster of migratory labour, they said, was damagingly absurd. "We will not side with the Akalis if they ever happen to raise this demand". No agriculture, it was said, is possible in Punjab without the help of migrant labourers.

While summarizing the perception of rich peasants it said:

The rich peasants were of the view that given the level of mechanization, Punjab's farmer will continue to rely upon outside labour for quite some time,. Some operations like paddy transplanting, cotton picking, etc., will continue to be labour-intensive. Punjab's agriculture is developed but this is not due to migratory labour. Outside labour has played no direct role in increasing productivity. It has, however, certainly lowered the cost of production in terms of providing cheap labour. Therefore, it is very important for the agricultural economy as a whole. No demand such as the one for migrants' ouster will ever be a success. On the other hand, it will be strongly opposed.

However, the survey substantiated the hostility of the local labour towards migratory labourers and said:

The local agricultural labourers did not view the influx of migratory labour favourably. They complained that the migrants had rendered them jobless and homeless. They took the migrants to be their competitors who limited their employment opportunities and depressed their daily/monthly/annual wage rates. To a great extent the migrants have replaced the local female labourers in the so-far traditionally held operations of

⁵ Manmohan Sharma and Navsharan, *Migratory Labour and its Impact on Rural Economy of Punjab*, Parts I & II; Part II yet to be published. Manmohan Sharma (1983) 'Migratory Labour and its impact on Rural Economy of Punjab', Part I, *Man & Development*, Vol IV, No 3.

transplanting paddy and weeding. It was found that the local agricultural labourers were hostile to, and full of resentment, indignation, and hatred towards the migrants.

Local labourers further stated: "If the Akalis raise the Demand for the ouster of migrant labourers we will definitely side with them and support them."

The survey also revealed that a section of the "Khalistan" protagonists advocated the ouster of migrants and were of the following opinion:

Migrant labourers are Hindus, from which it necessarily follows that they are Sikh haters and will never side with us to achieve our goals. They have no sympathy for our cause. Therefore, they should not be allowed to come to Punjab.

The above perception clearly indicates that there is a conscious and concerted attempt to communalise an issue which is mainly economic and is the focus of a factional, political fight within the Akali Dal.

At the other end of the spectrum, CPI and CPI(M) in Punjab, with an ideology which was secular at its core, did not perform a meaningful role to inculcate a secular and scientific attitude. Communist parties also mobilized their support base for incremental gains such as more diesel, increased remunerative prices, agrarian reforms, wage hikes, etc. These demands, in principle, embraced all sections and levels of the agrarian population.

In the sixties and seventies the CPs began propagating "land to the tiller" in the form of a "land grab movement". In the late sixties, the development of commercialization in agriculture and the increasing number of landless agricultural laborers made the Left parties raise demands for higher wages. Consequently, the demand for "land to the tiller" receded to the background. The demand for higher daily wages in turn aggravated the resentment of small and middle peasants, who also constituted these parties' support base. This resentment compelled the CPs to accommodate their interests by raising the demands for more diesel and other inputs.

The strategy, directed towards securing incremental benefits, failed to question the rule of capital, social divisions by skill, trade, industry as well as communal (ideology including casteism). The leadership in the CPs could not effectively articulate class interests and thus, coupled with its inability to rise above the existing cleavages of caste and religion in Punjab, failed to evolve a programme and/or identity counterposed to other political parties.

The role of political parties and groups, as discussed, acquires meaning in the context of our contention that the problem of communalism cannot be siphoned off by means of modernization, industrialization, strengthening of the law and order machinery, etc. We hold that there is a need for a meaningful, subjective intervention on the part of political parties and groups to counter communal ideology.

Interventions like the declaration of President's rule cannot provide a solution to a social, political and economic crisis.⁶ The persistence of terrorist activities in spite of measures like commissioning of para-military forces (BSF, CRPF, etc), prohibitory orders, shoot-at-sight orders and curfews indicates that the problem cannot be reduced to one of merely tackling the

⁶ On October 6, 1983, Punjab was brought under President's rule following the State Government's inability to combat increasing extremist violence. The action was specifically in response to the killing of six passengers of a Delhi-bound bus from Amritsar. The proclamation was issued in terms of Article 356 of the constitution.

activities of a few individuals. The recent killings in Punjab and Haryana cannot *merely* be ascribed to either individual extremists or political manipulations. There is a notion that it is mainly the electoral interests to garner and consolidate the so-called Hindu votes that are responsible for the present stalemate. It would be hazardous to give a monocausal explanation for such a complex reality. This, however, is not to deny the prevalence of the communal propaganda that the Hindus are a homogeneous political entity and have common political and economic interests.

This propaganda has been an integral part of the ideology of some of the communal Hindu groups in the past. But never in the past has it acquired such a militant posture and an appeal which has cut across political party lines. There are five extremist Hindu communal groups⁷. These groups are active in some of the urban areas of Punjab. The groups do not have any affiliation with national organisations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Hindu March, etc.

These communal groups could acquire some kind of support base because of the inactivity of the RSS, Hindu Manch etc. These communal groups do not have a significant mass following, but they do have some kind of a mass appeal in Punjab. The only group active is the Hindu Suraksha Samiti. This group was formed on September 26, 1982, at Patiala by Pawan Kumar Sharma, known to be a Youth Congress (I) activist. It became known after the incidents of violence at Patiala and Malerkotla in 1983.

The question arises as to why at this juncture a section of the Hindus as a religious group are responding (if they are) to such an ideology. In order to answer this question one has to first understand the process of the operation and se of communal ideology with a proper historical perspective.

Communal ideology does have its own social appeal. In a situation of scarce resources and a relatively stagnant economy, the generation of competition for jobs, etc., along communal lines benefits some of the individuals from the middle classes in the short run.

Communal propaganda was not utterly disconnected with social reality. The communalist could impose his interpretation of the reality on the middle class individuals because it seemed to conform to their experience of reality as they were then living it. Of course, the extent of benefit from communalism was larger the higher one went up in the social scale and the fewer became the competitors; the upper middle class individuals benefited far more than the lower middle class individuals. Communalism was likely to benefit the aspirants for High Court judgeship, university chair or vice-chancellorship, or the directorship of a hospital much more than those trying to become chaprasis or clerks, though the latter would also improve their life opportunities to a certain extent, even if marginally. Of course, in the long run, the latter were more likely not to be beneficiaries but victims of communalism (Bipan Chandra).

Such communal propaganda smudges objective reality. The discontentment amongst Hindus and Sikhs competing for jobs, licences, markets, etc., has not been caused by one another. This discontentment of both Hindu and Sikh communalists is a result of their being posited as workers, peasant, merchants and industrialists struggling for their interests in a situation of

⁷ These are the Hindus Suraksha Samiti, the Hindu Shiv Sena of Jagdish Tangri in Ludhiana, the Hindu Rashtriya Sangathan of Surinder Billa, the Brahman Sabha of Pandit Kishore Chand in Amritsar and the Hindu Front of Kalicharan of Ludhiana. These groups were formed in response to the activities of the Dal Khalsa, the Babbar Khalsa and other Sikh extremist groups.

scarce resources and not as a result of the one “community” competing against the other. However, communal propaganda by communal, religious and political leaders seeks to give a colour to this struggle between “communities”. The real conflicts are likely to get mystified and thus result in the identification of displaced targets.

Some of the communalists also advocate that it is possible to confront and counter one form of extremist communalism with another. This is a dangerous proposition. To put it in other words, the idea that the humiliation meted out to Sikhs and the killing of Sikhs in Haryana would teach a lesson to the extremists in Punjab is a form of reasoning which is counter-productive. As mentioned earlier, it is the communalism of one group that feeds the communalism of the other. The terrorists involved in such acts are merely used by economic and political vested interests and by others who adhere to beliefs and value patterns based on communal ideology. It is not only the extremists but also people influenced by communal ideology who take part in communal activities. The participants in such activities justify their involvement on normative as well as utilitarian grounds.

The possible solutions which are being offered by the people also help to understand the operation and impact of communal ideology. It is interesting to note that both Hindus as well as Sikh communalists seek the ruthless suppression of extremists belonging to the religious group other than their own. Some of the liberals, however, talk of a strict law and order approach for the extremists, irrespective of religious group affiliation. It has already been discussed that this problem cannot be reduced merely to a law and order problem.

The political solution suggested for the problem cannot be implemented. This is so because there is a lack of political will to counter obscurantist values and beliefs. Rather, these have been used for narrow electoral gains. A political solution to this problem cannot be found without forgoing electoral gains for the sake of national solidarity and humanity. This perhaps may not be acceptable to the powers that be. The non-institutionalisation of democratic, secular and scientific attitudes and lack of competitive politics has allowed communalism to persist.

The present crisis is the result of the competition for distributive benefits, concentration of land and other resources into the hands of fewer people, the lack of a secular education and inappropriate industrialization and urbanization. The socio-cultural realities are not given due weightage in the developmental strategies. It was assumed that modernization in agriculture and industry would automatically subsume obscurantist values and regional, caste and communal tensions. And that would, in turn, create an environment conducive for societal welfare, distributive justice and the furtherance of the scientific temper, what we see happening is just the opposite. Reactionary forces and obscurantist values have been strengthened, leading to varied forms of tensions. Hence, there is a need for a second look at the strategy of development. This was not a total strategy. It was confined merely to economic development and lost sight of socio-cultural planning. It is this neglect which has aggravated the present crisis. The future socio-economic development of Punjab and the consolidation of human freedom depend upon the systematic and imaginative tackling of the problem of communalism.