

Third Lecture

Agrarian Change and Social Transformation in Contemporary Punjab.

Brief Outline

Despite being rather small in size, occupying a little less than two per cent of the total geographical space and having a little more than two per cent of India's total population, the contemporary Indian Punjab enjoys a rather important place in cultural and political life of India. Until the early 1990s, Punjab was the most prosperous region of India in terms of average per capita income. Though Green Revolution technology was introduced elsewhere also, Punjab has come to be known as the most successful example of agricultural development during the post-independence period.

Sociologically and politically also Punjab has been an interesting and important region of India. Bengal and Punjab were the only two provinces that were partitioned in 1947, at the time of independence from colonial rule. Apart from its active involvement in the freedom movement, Punjab has also witnessed some of the most powerful identity movements during the last century. Punjab is also located on the 'periphery' of India, on India's border with Pakistan, and is one of the few states where the Hindus, who constitute more than 80 per cent of India's population, are a minority. Despite being non-Hindus, the 'low caste' Sikhs of the state have the distinction of being included in the list of the Scheduled Castes, a status that was not granted to their counterparts in the other minority communities, i.e., Muslims and Christians. The Green Revolution and various social movements have brought about some very interesting changes in social and political life of Punjab during the last five or six decades. I will try to organize my lecture around the discussion of these changes. The lecture will cover the following points:

1. The partition of India and evolution of contemporary Punjab as a separate region; minority politics and the nation-state.
2. The agrarian change during post-independence period: Land Reforms and the Green Revolution.
3. Caste, class and the regional politics.
4. Crisis of agriculture and emerging trends.

Readings:

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