

The Violence of the
G R E E N
REVOLUTION

*Third World Agriculture, Ecology
and Politics*

V A N D A N A S H I V A



Zed Books Ltd.
London and New Jersey



Third World Network
Penang, Malaysia

5

THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL COSTS OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION

THE ecological costs and natural resource conflicts associated with the Green Revolution were rooted in the replacement of cropping systems based on diversity and internal inputs with systems based on uniformity and external inputs. The shift from internal to externally purchased inputs did not merely change ecological processes of agriculture. It also changed the structure of social and political relationships, from those based on mutual (though asymmetric) obligations – within the village to relations of each cultivator directly with banks, seed and fertilizer agencies, food procurement agencies, and electricity and irrigation organisations. Further since all the externally supplied inputs were scarce, it set up conflict and competition over scarce resources, between classes, and between regions. Atomised and fragmented cultivators related directly to the state and the market. This generated on the one hand, an erosion of cultural norms and practices and on the other hand, it sowed the seeds of violence and conflict.

The centralised planning and allocation that made the Green Revolution possible in Punjab, affected people's lives

in direct ways. But it also affected their ideas of identity and self. With government as referee, handing down decisions in all matters, each frustration becomes a political issue. In a context of diverse communities, that centralised control leads to communal and regional conflict. Every policy decision is translated into the politics of 'we' and 'they'. 'We' have been unjustly treated, while 'they' have gained privileges unfairly. In Punjab, this polarised thinking gets expressed with the added dimension of religious discrimination against the Sikhs.¹

The large scale experiment of the green revolution has not only pushed nature to the verge of ecological breakdown, but also seems to have pushed society to the verge of social breakdown.

In 1972, Francine Frankel in 'The Political Challenge of the Green Revolution' had written that:

'The green revolution is accompanied by an accelerated disruption in traditional societies. More rapidly than in other areas, traditional heirarchical arrangements rooted in norms of mutual interdependence and (non-symmetric) obligations give way to adversary relations based on new notions of economic interest...

*'It is not too early moreover, to consider one major implication of this analysis, namely that disruption is accelerated to so rapid a rate that the time available for autonomous re-equilibrating process, – even if such processes are operative.....is critically curtailed. Thus, in the absence of countervailing initiatives, forces already in motion will push traditional societies in rural areas to a total breakdown.'*²

In 1972, the prediction of breakdown seemed far-fetched.

In 1989 it no longer seems so.

The rapid and large scale introduction of the Green Revolution technologies dislocated the social structure and political processes at two levels. It created growing disparities among classes, and it increased the commercialisation of social relations.

As Frankel observed, the Green Revolution was the instrument of a complete erosion of social forms. 'In those regions where the new technology has been most extensively applied, it has accomplished what a century of disruption under colonial rule failed to achieve, the virtual elimination of the stability residuum of traditional society – the recognition of mutual non-symmetric obligations by both the landed and landless classes.'³

While Frankel had predicted social breakdown, she had seen it as emerging from class conflict. Yet as the Green Revolution unfolded, it is the communal and ethnic aspects that come to the fore.

It was assumed that with development and modernisation communal conflicts will be swept away. However, recent experience suggests the opposite.

Modernization and economic development may, as in the case of Punjab harden ethnic identities and provoke or intensify conflict on the basis of religion, culture or race.

Most analysts of the crisis in Punjab have focussed exclusively on the politics of religion, or on the intrigue of electoral politics.^{4,5} In this chapter I would like to go beyond the conventional reading of the conflicts in Punjab and trace how they are also linked structurally to the political, economic and cultural processes inherent to the Green Revolu-

tion transformation.

After an early experience of prosperity, Punjab farmers were rapidly disillusioned. In 1971-72, the returns on wheat cultivation were 27% on investment. By 1977-78 cultivators complained that their return had fallen to less than two percent of their investment. Even the well-to-do farmers started to experience the political and economic dislocation and indebtedness that the landless and smaller farmers had experienced immediately. After two decades of the rising debts and falling profits, the rich poor contradiction had become a centre-state conflict. Further, since Punjab farmers were Sikh farmers, and the regional party was the Akali Party, the Centre-State conflicts were quickly transformed into communal conflicts.

Three kinds of conflicts seem to have converged in creating what has been called the Punjab crisis.

The first is related to conflicts emerging from the very nature of the Green Revolution; such as conflicts over river waters, class conflict, the pauperisation of the lower peasantry, the use of labour-displacing mechanisation, the decline in the profitability of modern agriculture etc., all heading to a disaffected peasantry engaged in farmers' protests.

Secondly, there were conflicts related to religion-cultural factors and revolving around the Sikh identity. These conflicts were rooted in the cultural erosion of the Green Revolution which commercialized all relations, and created an ethical vacuum where nothing is sacred and everything has a price. Religious revivalism which emerged to correct the moral and social crisis crystallised finally in the emergence of a separatist Sikh identity.

The third set of conflicts were related to the sharing of

economic and political power between the centre and state.

The shift from local organisation and internal inputs to centralised control and external and imported inputs restricted the nature of power between the farmers and the government and the state and the centre. Just as at the level of natural resources, the shift from diversity to monocultures, and the shift from internal inputs to external inputs of seeds and chemicals led to ecological vulnerability of agricultural ecosystems, the associated shift to external dependence politically led to societal vulnerability.

The rise of the market and rise of the state that was part of the Green Revolution policy led to the destruction of community and the homogenising of social relations on purely commercial criteria. The shift from internal farm inputs to centrally controlled external inputs shifted the axis of political power and social relations. It involved a shift from mutual obligations within the community to electoral politics aimed at state power for addressing local agricultural issues.

The processes of centralisation were associated with the processes of homogenisation. To a large extent the movements for regional, religious, and ethnic revival are movements for the recovery of diversity in a context of homogenisation. The paradox of separatism is that it is a search for diversity within a framework of uniformity, it is a search for identity in a structure based on erasure and erosion of identities. The shift from Sikh farmers demands to the demand for a separate Sikh state comes from the collapse of horizontally organised diverse communities into atomised individuals linked vertically to state power through electoral politics. The ecological crisis of the Green Revolution is thus mirrored in a cultural crisis caused by an erosion of diversity and structures of local governance and the emergence of

homogenisation and centralised external control over the daily activities of agriculture food production.

The Economic Costs: A narrow and shortlived prosperity

By the 1980s, the optimism of the Green Revolution had faded in Punjab. The farmers, rich and poor alike, were feeling the pinch of ecological erosion, debt and declining profit margins. In addition, they were beginning to react to the cultural erosion that had been the result of the spread of commercial agriculture. Finally, since the policies in which they were trapped were policies created by the Centre, they felt a sense of exclusion from meaningful political participation in key decisions that affected their socio-economic status. Farmers' protests and agitations around these issues therefore came to the centre stage of Punjab politics, in the early 1980s. By the mid-1980s however, politics in Punjab was totally communalised, and conflicts emerging from an agricultural crisis were rendered intractable.

The Green Revolution was primarily a technocratic response to problems of growing conflict in agrarian societies. However, soon after the introduction of the new technologies, it was being recognised that they could generate a new range of agrarian conflicts, by increasing the polarisation between rich and poor farmers. A 1969 report of the Home Ministry on 'The Causes and Nature of the Current Agrarian Tension' identified inequality in landholdings as a 'pre-disposing' factor for agrarian tensions. However, the 'proximate' causes for open conflict were located in the new agricultural strategy and the Green Revolution.

The inequality generating effects of the Green Revolu-

tion were built into the strategy of 'building on the best' – the best endowed region and the best endowed farmers. The increase in resource intensity of inputs for Green Revolution agriculture implied the increase in capital intensity of farming which tended to generate new inequalities between those who could use the new technology profitably, and those for whom it turned into an instrument of dispossession. The poorer peasants were unable to maintain their land holdings under the high input economies of the Green Revolution. Between 1970 and 1980, a large number of smallholdings disappeared in Punjab due to economic non-viability. In 1970-71, the total number of operational holdings in Punjab was 1,375,382 which fell to 1,027,127 in 1980-81, a decline of nearly 25%.⁶

Dasgupta has produced evidence which points to the conclusion that in Punjab 'the distribution of operated land has shifted in favour of the richer farmers under the new technology'.⁷ According to Bhalla, both in the high yielding wheat and rice area, 'the distribution of operated land has shifted in favour of big farmers'.⁸

The Green Revolution thus started a process of depeasantisation of the peasantry, through increasing costs of cultivation. Agricultural labour also does not seem to have gained from the Green Revolution in Punjab. Bardhan concludes that 'even in the prime' Green Revolution area of Punjab/Haryana, the proportion of people below a bare minimum level of living has increased.⁹ A recent comprehensive compilation of data for the Punjab, covering the years between 1961 and 1977, (The data provided indexes of real wage rates for each year, for the whole state and district on ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, cotton picking, and other agricultural operations) revealed that 'in many years the rise in money wages lagged behind price changes, leading to reduced real wage rates for most operations

between 1965 and 1968, and again in 1974, 1975 and 1977'.¹⁰

Class conflict emerging from the polarisation of rural society has been an old feature of rural India. In recent years, the rural/urban conflict has become a new preoccupation of farmers' movements, which see rural 'Bharat' as exploited by the needs of the urban elites for cheap food and raw material. The Green Revolution strategy, was in fact a strategy for creating cheap food surpluses for the growing urban/industrial centres. In the early years, food subsidies and support prices created an artificially profitable economic package for the Punjab farmers, especially the more prosperous ones. However, the intensive input agriculture needed credit, which over time was converted into indebtedness. Further, costs of inputs kept rising as higher rates of fertiliser and pesticides had to be applied to maintain yields. In addition, the high subsidies and support prices of the early years could not be maintained indefinitely. Thus while

Table 5.1: Procurement price, cost of production and rate of return over cost in wheat cultivation in Punjab

Year	Procurement price (Rs. per quintal)	Cost of production (Rs. per quintal) (percent)	Rate of return over cost
1970-71	76	61.04	24.50
1971-72	76	59.71	27.28
1972-73	76	67.10	13.26
1973-74	76	74.34	2.23
1975-76	105+8*	99.45	13.62
1976-77	105	101.39	3.56
1977-78	110	108.57	1.32
1978-79	112.50	101.45	10.89

*Bonus

Source: Rajbans Kaur, 'Agricultural Price Policy in Developing Countries with special reference, to India' unpublished PhD Thesis, Punjab University, Patiala, 1982, p275.

in the initial phase of the Green Revolution, agriculture was a paying proposition with high rates of return over cost, it had very rapidly created a crisis of indebtedness and falling rates of return. In Punjab, the average excess of procurement price over cost of production changed from (-) 14.0% during 1954-55 through 1956-57 to (+) 124.5% in 1970-71. Over time, the subsidies that had made agriculture artificially remunerative, were reduced.¹¹ Table 5.1 shows how the rate of return over cost in Punjab declined from 25.89% on average for 1970-71 and 1971-72 to an average of 6.11% during 1977-78 and 1978-79.

The burden of declining rates of return was strongest among small farmers. Small farmers with land size of 5 acres or less constitute 48.5% of the cultivating households in Punjab. According to a survey, in 1974 small farmers were annually running a per capita loss of Rs125 whereas farmers with land between 5 and 10 acres were producing a per capita profit of Rs50 while farmers with land more than 20 acres were producing a per capita profit of Rs1,200. Another survey carried out between 1976-77 and 1977-78 indicates that marginal and small farmer's households were annually running into an average deficit of Rs1512.17 and Rs1648.19. Another study points out that 24% of small farmers and 31% of marginal farmers live below the poverty line in the Green Revolution state of Punjab.¹² The Johl Committee report also confirms that except for an increase in per hectare income during 1977-78 and 1978-79, there has been a decline in returns from farming in Punjab. Even during the period when agriculture in the State witnessed an overall fast rate of growth, farm incomes in real terms have shown a stagnation from the early eighties. There is, in fact, even evidence of a decline in the real income per hectare from 1978-79 onwards. According to Johl, this tendency is expected to get accentuated because stagnation had been reached at all levels – area cropped, prices, and productivity of the two

principal crops viz. paddy and wheat which had all reached their limits by the early 1980s.

The short term economic viability of high profits for the 'progressive' farmer of Punjab, and cheap and assured food supplies for India's urban population was created at what was to eventually be a high political cost for Punjab's farmers. Green Revolution agriculture of intensive inputs was made possible with the introduction of agricultural credit. The Agricultural Refinance Corporation (ARC), a consortium of commercial banks was set up in 1963 to give medium and long term credit for major macro-level development projects. ARC has since been reconstituted as NABARD, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. The creation of artificial profitability for the production of Green Revolution wheat and rice was based on the creation of highly centralised institutions for the control of farm economies. Two central bodies related to food production, procurement and distribution were established in 1965 on World Bank advice. One was the Food Corporation of India (FCI) which was responsible for procurement, import, distribution, storage and the sale of food grain. The other was the Agricultural Prices Commission (APC) which determined the minimum support prices for food grains, and through it, controlled cropping patterns, land use and profitability. Through food price and procurement, the Central government now controlled the economics of food grain production and distribution. The profitability of food-grain production in this centralised and enclavised form could not be maintained overtime. The economics of the artificially high procurement price of Rs76 per quintal in the early days of the Green Revolution, which was nearly Rs15 per quintal higher than market prices, was based on compensating the high costs of domestically procured foodgrain and pooling them with the low priced imported foodgrains. With the phasing out of concessional imports of foodgrains in the

1970s, it became impossible for the Central government to maintain high procurement prices without heavy losses. In addition, the intensive agriculture approach which had focussed on the best endowed regions like Punjab, lowered the food producing and food purchasing capacities of other regions which were resource poor and had been excluded from the new agricultural strategy.

The concentration on paddy and wheat in Punjab agriculture, and the lack of purchasing power in the neglected regions of rural India, led to a build up of heavy surpluses which Punjab could not sell profitably. Meanwhile, food deprivation was increasing largely as a result of the Green Revolution strategy. The 70% of agricultural land in the country left out of the intensive development suffered decline in productivity due to neglect and lack of inputs. People from these regions grew poorer.

The imbalance was not just regional, but also related to crops. The increase in rice and wheat production in Punjab had been, in part, achieved by creating a scarcity in oilseeds and pulses, necessary for a nutritional balance in vegetarian diets. The logic of specialisation – regionwise and cropwise – and the related logic of profitability of the Green Revolution strategy reached its limits in the 1980s. During the 1985 paddy marketing season, the farmers of Punjab could not sell their produce profitably. The problem started with the late announcement of a procurement price for paddy, as a result of which the procurement agencies started their produce at very low prices to rice millers and traders. The crisis in marketing of paddy made it evident to the farmers and the government of Punjab that they had to break out of centrally controlled specialised production of food grain and go in for diversification. A committee, under the Chairmanship of S S Jhul was thus formed to advise the Punjab government on the diversification of Punjab's agriculture, to free it from

centralised control.

In less than two decades, Punjab's farmers, the main beneficiaries of the Green Revolution strategy were beginning to feel victimised. Punjab's farm organisations were appealing to the farmers to free themselves of the new colonialism. Since it was the agencies of the Central government that controlled the policies related to the new agriculture, the conflict that emerged in Punjab became primarily a conflict between Punjab and the Central government. The unique role that the Green Revolution strategy had created for Punjab for being the bread basket of India also became the reason for new discontent, when the benefits started fading. By the 1980s, Punjab's farmers were organising themselves on the grounds of being treated like a colony of the Centre to feed India. 'For the past three years, we have increasingly lost money from sowing all our acreage with wheat. We have been held hostage to feed the rest of India. We are determined that this will change'.¹³

The 1980s were marked by farmers agitations over the high costs of agricultural inputs. Campaigns were launched on water rates, electricity rates, procurement prices etc. On 31 January 1984, a call for 'rasta roko' (road blockade) was given and farmers got Rs12.5 crore in relief for the damage caused by pests to their cotton crop. On 12 March 1984, the Bhartiya Kisan Union started a gherao (blockade) of the Punjab Raj Bhawan (Governor's residence) at Chandigarh demanding a stop to higher electricity rates, higher procurement price for wheat and the scraping of APC and its replacement by an agricultural 'cost' commission. Finally on 18 March 1984, an agreement was reached and the gherao was lifted.

However, since the farmers' grievances arising from a nonsustainable miracle remained, farmers' agitations did

not stop. During April 1984, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) focussed its campaign on indebtedness, which was called 'karja roke'. In most villages in Punjab, the BKU hung notices at village entrances and crossings which said, 'without proper accounting, recovery of loans is illegal. Entry of recovery staff in the village is not allowed without permission. By order, BKU'. The high dependence on credit necessary for high inputs and the falling rates of return on investment had left most Punjab farmers heavily indebted. The agricultural credit in Punjab works out at Rs103 per hectare for short term production credit alone, against a national average of Rs35. Squeezed by debts and declining returns, Punjab's farmers were protesting throughout the state during the first half of 1984.

Communalising the Farmers' Protests

In May 1984, the farmers' agitation was at its height in Punjab. For a week, from 10 to 18 May, farmers gheraoed the Punjab Raj Bhawan (Governor's House) since the state was under the President's rule. By conservative estimates, at any time, more than 15-20 thousand farmers were present in Chandigarh during the gherao. Earlier, from 1 to 7 May, the farmers had decided to boycott the grain markets to register their protest against the Central government procurement policy. On 23 May 1984, Harchand Singh Longowal, the Akali Dal President, announced that the next phase of the agitation would include attempts to stop the sale of food grain to the Food Corporation of India. Since Punjab provides the bulk of the reserves of grain, which are used to sustain the government distribution system and thus keep prices down, a successful grain blockade implied a serious national crisis and would have given Punjab a powerful bargaining tool for its demands for greater state autonomy. On 3 June, Mrs Gandhi called out the army in Punjab and

on 5th of June the Golden Temple was attacked, which was for the Sikhs, an attack on the Sikh faith and Sikh dignity and honour. After Operation Bluestar, as the military operation was called, the Sikhs as a farming community has been forgotten; only Sikhs as a religious community remain in the national consciousness. Nothing after that could be read without the 'communal' stamp on it. The movement in Punjab was no longer primarily a movement to protect the farmers' interests but had been submerged by a movement to protect the Sikh identity.

A crisis that was economically and politically rooted in the Green Revolution rapidly expressed itself in communal overtones because of the contingent overlapping of the identity of the farming community in Punjab with a Jat Sikh identity. Discontent that had expressed itself in Punjab in the 1980's was the result of centrally controlled agricultural production and the resulting economic and political crisis. It was located in Centre-state politics and the political economy of the Green Revolution. However, because of the contingent factor that farmers in Punjab are largely Jat Sikhs, and the party representing their interests is the Akali party, it was possible to represent Green Revolution related conflicts as communal conflicts, and treat them as only having a religious base unrelated to the politics of technological change and its socio-economic impact. The Green Revolution failed to bring lasting peace and prosperity to Punjab. Instead, it sowed the seeds of violence and discontent, which got an increasingly communal colouring as a source of diversion from the politics of the Green Revolution. There were, of course, cultural reasons which facilitated the communalising of the Punjab crisis. The Green Revolution package was not just a technological and political strategy. It was also a cultural strategy which replaced traditional peasant values of co-operation with competition, of prudent living with conspicuous consumption, of soil and crop husbandry

with the calculus of subsidies, profits and remunerative prices.

The conflicts arising at the ecological and economic levels converged with the cultural conflicts between traditional values and the culture of conspicuous consumption created by the short term affluence and profitability of the Green Revolution. The 1980s saw in Punjab a genuine cultural upsurge as a corrective to the commercialisation of Punjab's culture. Two decades of rapid transformation of the economy, society and culture of Punjab had generated an ethical and moral crisis. The overriding culture of cash and profitability disrupted old socialities and fractured the moral norms that had governed society. Circulation of new cash in a society whose old forms of life had been dislocated led to an epidemic of social diseases like alcoholism, smoking, drug-addiction, the spread of pornographic films and literature and violence against women.

Religion provided a corrective source of values to this cultural degeneration, and was also a source of solace to the victims of the violence that was associated with the new forms of degenerate consumption. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who later became the leading ideologue for separatism and religious fundamentalism, gained his early popularity with the Punjab peasantry by launching an ideological crusade against the cultural corruption of Punjab. The most ardent followers of Bhindranwale in his first phase of rising popularity were children and women, both because they were relatively free of the new culture of degenerative consumption, and they were worst hit by the violence it generated. In the second phase of Bhindranwale's popularity, men also joined his following, replacing vulgar movies with visits to gurdwaras, and reading the 'gurbani' (teachings of the Gurus) in place of pornographic literature. The Sant's following grew as he successfully regenerated the 'good' life

of purity, dedication and hard work by reviving these fundamental values of the Sikh religion. The popularity of Bhindranwale in the minds of the Sikhs in the countryside was based on this positive sense of fundamentalism as revitalising the basic moral values of life which had been the first casualty of commercial capitalism. During the entire early phase of Bhindranwale's preachings, he made no anti-government or anti-Hindu statement, but focussed on the positive values of the Sikh religion. His role was largely that of a social religious reformer.

Sikh revivalism took a negative turn and became negativistic-fundamentalism with the interference of party politics, especially from the Congress(I).¹⁴ Bhindranwale was used against the Akalis, for electoral gains and when he was himself killed in the Golden Temple after Operation Bluestar, Punjab politics and the Sikh religion had been totally communalised. After Operation Bluestar and the Anti-Sikh Violence in November 1984, following Indira Gandhi's assassination, the issue of the danger to the Sikh identity became a central concern in Punjab. The communal form of Sikh revivalism came to dominate over the earlier regenerative and ethical form. However, it never became a large scale communal conflict between Hindus and Sikhs within Punjab, but was and continues to be a conflict between what is perceived as a communal Hindu Centre and a Sikh people in a Sikh state.

The 'Gurmata' (Collective resolution by the Congregation) passed at a Sarbat Khalsa (All Sikh Convention) on 13 April, 1986 expresses this perception of the communal conflict as primarily a Centre-state conflict explicitly.

'If the hard-earned income of the people or the natural resources of any nation or region are forcibly plundered; the goods produced by them are paid at arbitrarily determined prices while the goods bought by them are sold at

*high prices and in order to carry this process of economic exploitation to its logical conclusion, the human rights of people or of a nation are crushed, then these are the indices of slavery of that nation, region or people. Today, the Sikhs are shackled by the chains of slavery. This type of slavery is thrust upon the states and 80% of India's population of poor people and minorities. To smash these chains of slavery, Sikhs, on a large scale, by resorting to reasoning and by using force and by carrying along with them these 80% people of India, have to defeat the communal Brahmin-Bania combine that controls the Delhi Durbar. This, is the only way of establishing hegemony of Sikhism in this country. In this way, under the hegemony of Sikh world-view and politics, a militant organisation of the workers, the poor, the backward people and the minorities (Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Dalits etc.) has to be established.'*¹⁵

In all the Gurmata, the hold of money-power in social life is decried and this is considered the cause of the deterioration in the moral fibre of society and the cause of the rise of greed and selfishness and their consequences in social and political life. The concentration of political power is also subjected to sharp criticism and the necessity for collective democratic decision making is emphasised. The regeneration of Sikhism is linked to the regeneration of tradition, 'to liberate oneself from money, ego, cowardice, ignorance, arrogance and stupidity and instead of seeking collective welfare through one's own welfare, to seek one's welfare through the collective welfare.'¹⁶

From the foregoing analysis it becomes clear that the revival of the cultural identity of the Sikhs was more in response to the erosion of regional autonomy and the cultural and moral erosion of life in Punjab by the commercial culture of the Green Revolution. It was not a cultural conflict of Sikhs with people of the Hindu religion. In 1978, at the time of the Anandpur Sahib resolution, issues of river waters, food production and pricing, and the political economy

of Centre-state relations were at the top of the demands. The Centre systematically avoided these political and economic issues and communalised the situation after the 1980 elections by calling the Anandpur Sahib resolution secessionist and by withdrawing the case that the Akalis had filed on water disputes in 1978 in the Supreme Court. By avoiding the regional and developmental issues raised by the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the Centre avoided responding to a serious developmental crisis. Instead of responding to the valid demand for redefining Centre-state relationships, it raised the bogey of Sikh separatism. The Dharam Yudh declared by the Akali Dal on 4 August 1982, has to be interpreted in the Indian meaning of Dharam as justice and rights, not as religion. Dharam Yudh is a fight for justice, not a religious war against members of another religious community. Dharam Yudh became central to Punjab after Operation Bluestar and the November 1984 Sikh massacres because over and above the violation of regional autonomy, the people of Punjab were also victims of a violation of cultural and religious identity. Finally, all these violations relate to issues of rights and justice, and the violator of these rights was not another ethnic or religious group, but the centre of power of a national security state.

Since Independence, India has constantly been embroiled in tensions between the Centre and the federating units. This has led political analysts to assume that the cultural diversity in India will soon bring down the fragile unity in the Centre which embodies the nation state. However a closer inspection of earlier conflicts between the Centre and the federating units reveals that cultural factors *per se* have never put any tension on the political unity of this country. If anything, purely cultural assertions have been easily absorbed by the Indian nation state because its power of decision making was increased. The first of these was the demand for unilingual states. During the linguistic move-

ments the Centre had to preside over the reshaping of the administrative structure and boundaries of the constituent elements but it did not have to deny the linguistic demands of any major linguistic group by accepting the linguistic demands of another. Its own power increased, without decreasing the power of constituent units. But with regional movements emerging from conflicts related to the developmental process, the ruling party at the centre, more particularly the Congress (I), was for the first time faced with a political formation that was in conflict with it on political and economic grounds. To give in to the new demands was to give up the immense power the Centre had acquired through restructuring agricultural policy. It therefore had to divert the politics.

As observed by a commentator,

*'now was the time for the Centre to strike back. And the Centre struck back ethnically. It ethnicised secular issues in order to marginalise its opponents, one by one, from the national main stream. The fact that the demarcation of state boundaries is superimposed by linguistic and/or religious markers provided the temptation for the regional political formations to lapse into the ethnic slot the Congress was pushing them into.'*¹⁷

Development, Social Disintegration and Violence

The process of development leads, in effect, to turning one's back to the soil as a source of meaning and survival, and turning to the state and its resources for both. The destruction of organic links with the soil also leads to destruction of organic links within society. Diverse communities, co-operating with each other and the land become different communities competing with each other for the conquest of the land. The homogenisation processes of development do not fully wipe away differences. Differences persist,

not in an integrating context of plurality, but in the fragmenting context of homogenization. Positive pluralities give way to negative dualities, each in competition with every 'other', contesting for the scarce resources that define economic and political power. The project of development is unleashed as a source of growth and abundance. Yet by destroying the abundance that comes from the soil and replacing it with resources of the state, new scarcities and new conflicts for scarce resources are created. Scarcity, not abundance, characterizes situations where nothing is sacred but everything has a price. As meaning and identity shifts from the soil to the state and from plural histories to a singular history of the Rostowian path, ethnic, religious and regional differences which persist are forced into the straight-jacket of 'narrow nationalism'. Instead of being rooted spiritually in the soil and the earth, uprooted communities root themselves in models of power presented by the nation state. Diversity is mutated into duality, into the experience of exclusion, of being 'in' or 'out'. The intolerance of diversity becomes a new social disease, leaving communities vulnerable to breakdown and violence, decay and destruction. The intolerance of diversity and the persistence of cultural differences sets up one community against another in a context created by a homogenising state, carrying out a homogenising project of development. Difference, instead of leading to richness of diversity, becomes the base for diversion and an ideology of separatism.

In the South Asian region, the most 'successful' experiments in economic growth and development have become, in less than two decades, crucibles of violence and civil war. Culturally diverse societies, engineered to fit into models of development have lost their organic community identity. From their fractured, fragmented and false identities, they struggle to compete for a place in the only social space that remains – the social space defined by the modern state.

The upsurge of ethnic religious and regional conflicts in the Third World today may not be totally disconnected from the ecological and cultural uprooting of people, deprived identities, pushed into a negative sense of self with respect to every 'other'. Punjab, the exemplar of the Green Revolution miracle until recently one of the fastest growing agricultural regions of the world is today a region riddled with conflict and violence. At least 15,000 people have lost their lives in Punjab in the last six years. During 1986, 598 people were killed in violent conflicts. In 1987, the number was 1,544. In 1988 it had escalated to 3,000. And 1989 shows no sign of peace in Punjab. Punjab is the most advanced example of the disruption of links between the soil and society. The Green Revolution strategy integrated Third World farmers into the global markets of fertilizers, pesticides and seeds, and disintegrated their organic links with their soils and communities. The progressive farmer of Punjab became the farmer who could most rapidly forget the ways of the soil and learn the ways of the market. One outcome of this was violence to the soil resulting in water logged or salinated deserts, diseased soils and pest-infested monocultures. Another outcome was violence in the community, especially to women and children. Commercialisation linked with cultural disintegration created new forms of addictions and new forms of abuse and aggression.

The religious resurgence of the Sikhs that took place in the early 1980s was an expression of a search for identity in the ethical and cultural vacuum that had been created by destroying all value except that which serves the market place. Women were the most active members of this movement of resurgence. There was also a parallel movement of farmers, most of whom happened to be Sikhs, protesting against centralised and centralising farm policies of the state which left the Punjab farmers disillusioned after a short-lived prosperity. The struggles of Sikhs as farmers and as a religious

community were, however, rapidly communalized and militarized. On the one hand, the people of Punjab became victims of state terrorism exemplified by the attack on the most sacred shrine of the Sikhs – the Golden Temple. On the other hand, they were victims of the terrorism of Sikh youth whose sense of justice was constrained by the political contours of a narrow state concept of the Sikh identity. Punjab, the land of the five rivers, was forgotten and redefined as Khalistan. The soil gave way to the state as the metaphor for organising the life of society.

The conflicts were thus relocated in a communalised zone for the contest of statehood and state power. They moved away from their beginnings in tension between a disillusioned, discontented, and disintegrating farming community and a centralising state which controls agricultural policy, finance, credit, inputs and pieces of agricultural commodities. And they also moved away from the cultural and ethical reappraisal of the social and economic impact of the Green Revolution.

The Green Revolution was to have been a strategy for peace and abundance. Today there is no peace in Punjab. There is also no peace with the soils of Punjab and without that peace, there can be no lasting abundance.

The communalising of Punjab has been the result of a process of political and economic transformation of a region to create the 'miracle' of the Green Revolution. Instead of generating peace, this strategy of transformation has generated violence and bloodshed. And as one technological fix fades away, a second Green Revolution is offered as a cure for the political and economic problems inherited from the first.

References 5

1. Jeffrey Robin, *What is happening to India?*, London: Macmillan, 1986, p37.
2. Francine Frankel, *The Political Challenge of the Green Revolution*, Centre for International Studies, Princeton University, 1972, p38.
3. *Ibid*, p4.
4. Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi Last Battle*, Delhi: Rupa Publishers, 1985.
5. Rajiv A Kapur, 'Sikh Separatism', *The Politics of Faith*, Herts (UK): Allen and Unwin, 1986.
6. S S Gill, 'Contradictions of Punjab Model of Growth and Search for an alternative', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15 October, 1988.
7. Biplab Dasgupta, *Agrarian Change and the New Technology in India*, Geneva: UNRISD, 1977, pp162-64, 167.
8. G S Bhalla, *Changing Structure of Agriculture in Haryana*, A study of the Impact of the Green Revolution, Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1972, pp269-85.
9. Kalpana Bardhan, 'Rural Employment, Wages & Labour Markets in India', *Economic and Political Weekly* 2, No.27, 2 July, 1977, pp1062-63.
10. Sheila Bhalla, 'Real Wage Rates of Agricultural Labourers in Punjab 1961-77', *Economic and Political Weekly* 14, No.26, 30 June, 1979.
11. S S Gill and K C Singhal Farmers, 'Agitation Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6 October, 1984.
12. Gopal Singh, *Socio-Economic Basis of the Punjab Crisis*, Vol. XIX, No.1 7 January, 1984, p42.
13. The statement was made by a representative of a Punjab farm Organization, *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 May, 1984, p10.
14. Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle*, Delhi: Rupa Publishers, 1988.
15. Pritam Singh, *Two facets of religious revivalism: A Marxist viewpoint of the Punjab question*, Punjab University, mimeo.
16. *Ibid*.
17. Dipankar Gupta, 'Communalising of Punjab - 1980-85', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XX, No.28, 13 July, 1985, p1185.