

# Peasant Movements in India

Several **Peasant Movements in India** emerged when traditional handicraft industries started to deteriorate due to economic policies implemented by various British colonial governments. These policies resulted in land ownership changes, overpopulation, and increased debt among India's peasant classes. As a result, peasant uprisings during the colonial era and peasant movements arose throughout the post-colonial period.

The Kisan (farmer) Sabha movement in Bihar is linked to Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, who established the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS) in 1929 to unite peasant concerns against zamindari attacks on their occupation rights. In 1938, Eastern Khandesh experienced a lot of rain, which ruined the farmers' crops.

Sane Guruji organized gatherings and processions across the country and marched to the Collector's office to have the land revenue waived. In 1942, many peasants joined the revolutionary movement, and the Peasant Movement gradually gained momentum and expanded throughout the rest of India.

## Evolution of Peasant Movement in India

During the British Colonial Period in the 18th and 19th centuries, social struggles against British atrocities included the Peasant Movements. The only goal of these movements was to bring back the previous systems of government and social interactions. The colonial economic policies that altered the agricultural structure, the destruction of handicrafts that caused overcrowding of the land, the new land revenue system, and the colonial administrative and judicial systems were all significant contributors to the impoverishment of the Indian peasantry. In the zamindari regions, peasants had to deal with excessive rents, unlawful levies, arbitrary evictions, and underpaid labour, which led to the evolution of peasant movement in India. In the Ryotwari regions, the government imposed high land taxes. The overloaded farmer frequently went to the neighbourhood moneylender for fear of losing his only source of income. The latter demanded excessive interest rates on the money lent.

The farmer was forced to mortgage his property and livestock. Sometimes, the moneylender would seize the items that were mortgaged. Over sizable areas, actual farmers were demoted to tenants-at-will, sharecroppers, and labourers who did not own land.

## List of Peasant Movements in India

Several peasant movements emerged in India during the colonial era due to economic policies implemented by several British colonial governments that caused the traditional handicraft industries to deteriorate. The list of Peasant Movements in India is given in the table below:

Peasant Movement	Period
Rangpur Dhing	1783
Narkelberia Uprising	1782 - 1831
Indigo Revolt	1859 - 1860
The Pagal Panthis	1825

Kol Rebellion	1832
Telangana Movement	1946 - 1952
Deccan Uprising	1875
Munda Ulgulan	1899 - 1900
Santhal Rebellion	1855
Mappila Rebellion in Malabar	1841 - 1920
Tebhaga Movement	1946 - 1947
Bardoli Satyagraha	1926

## Features of Peasant Movements in India

The first peasant movement in India were led by organizations founded in 1929 and 1936, respectively, as the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS). At the Lucknow Congress in 1936, Sahajanand was chosen as the AIKS's first president. The following are detailed UPSC notes on several Peasant Movements in India:

- **Rangpur Dhing (1783):** In Bengal's Rangpur area, the Rangpur Dhing (rebellion) broke out in 1783. Debi Singh used ruthless tactics to subjugate the farmers. The corporation ignored the farmers' complaints when the peasants petitioned it for help. As a result, the farmers decided to act independently. Peasants and zamindars took over the Parganas Of Kakina, Kazirhat, and Tapa in the district of Rangpur on January 18, 1783, sparking the start of the peasant movement.  
The ijardari system's flaws were exposed by this insurrection. The government changed the farming system even though the uprising was put down. It opened the door for a land revenue system that would last longer. Hindus and Muslims worked together to put down this revolt.
- **Narkelberia Uprising (1782 - 1831):** A leader of the Narkelberia Uprising in 1831 against zamindars and British colonial authority was Syed Mir Nisar Ali, also known as Titu Mir. Many believe the Narkelberia uprising was the first armed peasant movement against the British. At Narkelberia, he built a bamboo fort and proclaimed his country's independence from British rule.
- **Indigo Revolt (1859 - 1860):** The Indigo Rebellion, also known as Neel Bidroho, occurred in Bengal and was a revolt of farmers against British landowners who had forced them to grow indigo under very adverse circumstances. Farmers in Bengal's Nadia region protested by refusing to grow indigo.  
The responding police officers came under attack. The planters responded by raising the rent and evicting the farmers, which led to more discontent. Muslims, missionaries, and members of the Bengali aristocracy all supported the peasant movement. The revolt was supported by the whole rural population.
- **The Pagal Panthis (1825):** The Pagal Panthi was founded by Karam Shah and is primarily composed of the Hajong and Garo tribes from the Mymensingh region (formerly in Bengal). This peasant movement under Tipu Shah's direction developed into a broad armed uprising against the British Raj and the zamindar (landlord) system very fast. The

organization, which adhered to a syncretic mix of Hinduism, Sufism, and Animism, aimed to defend moral values and the rights of Bengal's landless peasants.

- **Kol Rebellion (1832):** Under their chiefs, the Kols and other tribes were free to live as they pleased, but the British invasion jeopardized that freedom. There was a lot of pressure due to the transfer of tribal lands, the incursion of moneylenders and merchants, and British legislation. In 1831 and 1832, the Kol tribe plotted an uprising that targeted mainly government officials and private moneylenders.
- **Telangana Movement (1946 - 1952):** Andhra Pradesh's Telangana Movement (1946 - 1952) campaigned against the feudal tyranny of the ruling class and rural landowners. In the 1920s and beyond, Hyderabad's agrarian socioeconomic system became extremely harsh. The jagirdars and deshmukhs, locally known as Dora, played a significant role in the political economy of rural Telangana.
- **Deccan Uprising (1875):** The British expanded their foothold outside of Bengal through the Permanent Settlement. The revenue system that was implemented in the Bombay Deccan region was Ryotwari Settlement. The uprising began in Poona and afterwards moved to Ahmednagar. A social boycott of the moneylender was another component of this peasant movement.
- **Munda Ulgulan (1899 - 1900):** This peasant movement was conducted by Birsa Munda in the area south of Ranchi. The Mundas historically benefited from a preferential rent rate as the forest's first cleared (Khuntkatti). However, this was undermined when traders and moneylenders known as jagirdars and thikadars arrived. In response to this uprising, the government passed the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908, recognized the rights of the Khuntkatti people, and outlawed Beth Begari (forced labour).
- **Santhal Rebellion (1855):** The Santhal Revolt took place between 1855 and 1856. The Santhal tribe has a substantial presence in Jharkhand. The first significant peasant insurrection in India was this one. The rebellion began in 1793 after the Permanent Land Settlement was implemented.  
The British took lands that the Santhals had cultivated for centuries through the colonization pattern described above. Zamindars, lenders, Europeans, and British government officials took advantage of farmers and raised the land tax at their expense. They felt such tyranny that they made the decision to revolt against the government and landlords.
- **Mappila Rebellion in Malabar (1841 - 1920):** The Muslims of the Malabar area of Kerala's Mappila tribe staged a series of uprisings known as the Mappila insurrection. The leading causes of this peasant movement in India were the rise in land taxes, the lack of security of tenancy, and landlord exploitation of the underprivileged peasantry. The uprising falls victim to a Hindu-Muslim clash.  
During this time, the Khilafat movement was launched to secure Muslim freedom. The 1921 rebellion resulted from long-standing agrarian discontent, which was made worse by their political isolation, religious and ethnic diversity, and distinctiveness.
- **Bardoli Satyagraha (1926):** The Bardoli taluqa in the Surat area saw considerable politicization after Gandhi entered the national political scene. The government's decision to increase land revenue by 30% in January 1926 marked the beginning of the movement. As soon as the Congress leaders objected, a Bardoli Inquiry Committee was established to investigate the situation. The committee concluded that the revenue increase wasn't warranted.

In February 1926, Vallabhbhai Patel was chosen to head the campaign. He received the title "Sardar" from the Bardoli ladies. Under Patel, the peasants of Bardoli made the decision to withhold payment of the revised assessment until the government either established an impartial tribunal or accepted the current sum as full payment.

- **Tebhaga Movement (1946 - 1947):** In the middle of the 1940s, the undivided Bengal saw the emergence of the Tebhaga movement. This movement is centred on sharecroppers' demands for tebhaga, two-thirds of their product, as opposed to the one-half customarily handed to them by the jotedars, a class of intermediary landowners. The colonial authorities implemented a reign of terror in the rural areas and employed all available repressive techniques to end this peasant movement.

## Causes of Peasant Movements

Peasants revolted for a variety of agrarian restructuring-related reasons. The reasons for these Peasant Movements in India are as follows:

- The eviction of peasants from their lands
- The number of land rent peasants were required to pay grew.
- Brutal acts committed by lenders
- The British government's economic policies abused the peasants while protecting landlords and moneylenders. In numerous instances, the peasants rose in revolt against this injustice.
- Traditional peasant crafts were destroyed.
- Peasants were denied land ownership during the Zamindari era, another cause of the peasant movement.
- When traditional handicrafts and other minor enterprises were destroyed by British economic policy, rural land was overburdened, changing ownership occurred, and the peasantry became heavily indebted and impoverished.
- In Zamindari districts, the peasants suffered from excessive rents, unlawful levies, arbitrary evictions, and underpaid labour. The government imposed significant land taxes.

## Impact of Peasant Movement in India

Following is a quick discussion of how **Peasant Movements in India** affected society:

- Although these uprisings had no intention of ending British authority in India, they did raise awareness among the population.
- Peasants became very conscious of their legal rights and fought for them in and out of court.
- Peasants, who fought directly for their objectives, became the dominant force in agricultural revolutions.
- During the Non-Cooperation Movement, several Kisan Sabhas were established to organize and campaign for peasant concerns.
- These movements contributed to restructuring the agrarian movement in India by weakening the influence of the landed class.
- Peasants needed to band together and fight against oppression and exploitation.
- These insurrectional peasant movements paved the way for numerous other upheavals around the nation.
- The peasants' voices were heard because they actively fought for their aspirations. Peasant demands were met in the Indigo revolt, Bardoli Satyagraha, the Pabna movement, and the Deccan riots.
- The nonviolent philosophy gave the peasants who took part in the revolution a lot of power. Nationalism also grew as a result of the peasant movement.