

# Tribal Movements in India

Many tribal movements in India rose in rebellion against the British because of their cruel and destructive inroads into their territory and way of life. The tribal people used to live peacefully and in tune with nature in their jungles for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British forces.

When the British arrived, they brought many changes to their way of life and strangers into their domain. As a result, they were demoted from landowners to enslaved people and debts. Essentially, the tribal uprisings were a defence of their independence and a reaction to this unwanted encroachment.

## Types of Tribal Movements in India

Tribal Movements in India are divided into two types based on the territory they occupy:

- **Frontier Tribes:** These people reside in the seven northeastern frontier states of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura.
- **Non-Frontier Tribe:** 89% of all tribes are comprised of these tribes. Mostly restricted to Andhra Pradesh, Central India, and West-Central India, the non-frontier tribes. Some tribes that participated in the tribal movements were the Bhil, Koya, Gond, Kol, and Khonds. The uprisings of these tribes were quite violent and included several important upheavals.

## Phases of Tribal Revolts

Tribal movements in India are categorized using the following 3 phases:

Phase	Period	Description
First Phase	1795 to 1860	The Kol Uprising, Khond Uprising, Santhal Uprising, and Early Munda Uprising were the major tribal uprisings during this time.
Second Phase	1860 to 1920	It includes both the Birsamunda-led Munda Uprising and Koya Rebellion.
Third Phase	1920 to 1947	It includes the Chenchu Tribal Movement, the Tanabhagat/Oraon Movement, and Rampa Uprising.

## List of Tribal Movements in India

A timeline of Indian tribal and peasant uprisings before 1947, when the country gained independence from British rule, is provided below. The **Tribal Movements in India** were a fight for independence and a response to this invasive intrusion. The list includes all tribal revolts and uprisings that took place in India while the country was ruled by the British.

<b>List of Tribal Movements in India</b>
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Tribal Uprising	Year	Features
Chuar Uprising	1766	Organized by Midnapore's indigenous tribesmen in opposition to the demands of land revenue and financial hardship.
Pahariyas' Rebellion	1778	Raja Jagganath led the Pahariyas of Raj Mahal Hills in their resistance to British encroachment on their territory.
Bhil Uprising	1818 - 1831 and 1913	Bhil Raj was established in the Western Ghats as resistance against Company authority. In 1913, Govind Guru reorganized the group to fight for Bhil Raj.
Ho and Munda Uprisings	1820 - 1837	Ho tribals guided by Raja Parahat in the Singhbhum and Chottanagpur region are opposed to the new farming revenue program. This eventually turned into the Munda insurrection.
Ramosi Uprising	1822 - 1829	by the Ramosi tribe of the western ghats, led by Chittur Singh, in opposition to British rule over the area.
Koli Uprising	1829	In 1829, 1839, and 1844 - 1848, the tribal populations of Gujrat and Maharashtra rebelled against the Company's rule.
Kol Rebellion	1832	Buddho Bagat led a rebellion by the Chottanagpur tribes against the British and moneylenders.
Khond Rebellion	1837 - 1856	Chakra Bisoi led an uprising of hill tribes from Tamil Nadu to Bengal against intrusion into tribal practices and the imposition of new taxes.

Santhal Rebellion	1855 - 1856	Bihar's tribal groups, led by Sido and Kanhu, fight zamindars and moneylenders.
Bhuyan and Juang Rebellions	1867	In 1867 and 1891, tribes in Keonjhar, Orissa, staged two uprisings.
Naikada Movement	1868	To establish Dharma Raj, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarati tribes battled the British and caste Hindus.
Kharwar Rebellion	1870	Bihar's tribal groups were opposed to actions related to revenue settlement.
Ahom's Revolt	1828 - 1833	Against the British government's broken pledge to leave Assam after the Burmese war.
Khasis' Revolt	1830	Tirath Singh led a rebellion in the Jaintia and Garo hills against foreign occupation.
Singphos' Rebellion	1830	in Assam against the British control of their region.
Koya Uprising	1879 - 1880	The police and moneylenders were overthrown by the eastern Godavari region's tribes under the leadership of Tomma Sora and Raja Annantyar.
Munda Rebellion	1899 - 1900	Under the leadership of Birsa Munda, the local tribes of Chotanagpur rebelled against the "Dikus."

## Tribal Movements in India in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Tribal uprisings, rebellions, and revolutions all over India were sparked by revolutionary tendencies. They wanted to take advantage of the situation to confront and eliminate the flaws and bad habits in contemporary tribal life. The following critical **Tribal Movements in India** are discussed from the standpoint of the UPSC and other exams:

- **Chuar Uprising (1766)** - A series of tribal revolts by the residents of the countryside surrounding the Jungle Mahal settlements of Midnapore, Bankura, and Manbhum

against the rule of the East India Company was known as the Chuar rebellion or Chuar revolt, also known as the Jungle Mahal movement, and took place between 1766 and 1816. The Chotanagpur regions of the Bengal Presidency had their first uprising against the East India Company (EIC) at this time (now West Bengal and Jharkhand).

- **Pahariyas' Rebellion (1778)** - A notable tribal uprising was the Pahariyas uprising in 1778, which Raja Jagannath led. The British implemented a pacification approach in the 1780s wherein Paharia chiefs received an annual stipend in exchange for making sure that their troops behaved properly. All Pahariyas did not agree with this policy. To continue the fight against the diku, or "outsiders," some withdrew far into the highlands, away from enemy forces.
- **Bhil Uprising (1818 - 1831)** - Bhils were a part of Maharashtra's Khandesh area. The British arrived in the region in 1818 and started infringing on Bhil territory. The indigenous Bhil Tribe was unwilling to accept any British land alterations. They consequently rose in rebellion against the invaders of the land, which took the shape of a tribal movement.  
The terrible treatment of the Bhils by the East India Company, who denied them their ancient forest rights and exploited them, was the catalyst for the uprising. In response, the British dispatched a force to put down the tribal uprising. However, the uprising was not in vain because the British made concessions to several levies and gave back forest rights as part of the peace accord.
- **Ramosi Uprising (1822 - 1829)** - Hill tribes known as Ramosis lived in the western ghats. They rebelled against the British under Chittur Singh's leadership because they disapproved of the British annexation program.  
The fundamental cause of this tribal rebellion was the new British Administrative system, which the tribal people believed was incredibly unfair and left them with no choice but to rise against the Britishers.  
The areas close to Satara were pillaged. The British eventually ended the tribal movement in 1829 and restored order. Some British people with a nonviolent attitude toward the Ramosis joined the hill police.
- **Kol Rebellion (1832)** - The Kol revolt was one of the most well-known tribal uprisings against British rule. One of the tribes who lived in the Chhotanagpur region was the Kols. Under their traditional leaders, they had complete authority, but after the British arrived, this situation altered.  
Outsiders arrived at the same time as the British. The colonial authority also introduced the idea of zamindars, traders, and non-tribal moneylenders. The Kols then lost their property to outside farmers and were forced to pay astronomical tax sums. Many ended up working as bonded labourers as a result.  
The Kols were also enraged by British court practices because of this. The Kols organized themselves under Buddho Bhagat and revolted against the British and the moneylenders during the uprising of 1831 - 1832.
- **Santhal Uprising (1855 - 1856)** - The Santhal Hul (sometimes referred to as the Santhal revolt) took place in the present-day states of Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal from 1855 until 1856, when the British defeated the tribal movement.  
The British and the Zamindaris claimed ownership of the indigenous Santhal land when the Zamindari system was implemented in the Bengal presidency.  
The Santhals, who primarily inhabited the Daman-ikoh districts, which are located between Rajmahal and Bhagalpur, rose in revolt against the foreigners, whom they referred to as "Dikus."  
They murdered numerous moneylenders and Company employees. The uprising was huge and intense. The Santhal community continues to commemorate the day of the

uprising. The British severely put down the uprising, killing over 20000 Santhals, including the two leaders of this tribal movement.

- **Khond Uprising (1837 - 1856)** - The Khonds lived in the central provinces and the hilly areas that stretched from Bengal to Tamil Nadu. Before the British arrived, they were independent due to the inaccessible steep terrain. They rebelled against the British over their exploitation of forest activities between 1837 and 1856, led by Chakra Bisoi, who took the name "Young Raja."

The rebellion included tribal people from Ghumusar, Kalahandi, and Patna. The main reasons for this tribal movement were the British attempt to prohibit the practice of "Mariah" (Sacrifice) and the accompanying imposition of new levies, as well as the influx of Zamindars and Sahukars (Moneylenders).

The Kols rose in opposition to the British-instituted "Maria Agency," using bows and arrows, swords, and axes as weapons. They received assistance from a few local militia clans under the command of Radha Krishna Dand Sena. When Chakra Bisoi was taken as a prisoner in 1955, the uprising was ultimately put to an end.

- **Munda Rebellion (1899 - 1900)** - The early Munda insurrection was one of the most well-known tribal uprisings against the country's ubiquitous British Rule. In and around Chotanagpur lived the Munda people. The Ulgulan revolt, which translates to "great disturbance," is another name for this tribal movement.

The Mundas revolted roughly seven times between 1789 and 1832 against the persecution brought on by moneylenders and the British Government. The Mundas used the Khuntkatti system, which involved joint ownership of land. However, the Zamindari system emerged with the arrival of the British and outside Zamindars, replacing the Khuntkatti.

Police stations, landlords' homes, churches, and British property were all set on fire by the Mundas. Birsa Munda was apprehended in 1900. Cholera caused his early death at the age of 25.

- **Koya Uprising (1879 - 1880)** - With the assistance of Khonda Sara chiefs, the Koyas of the eastern Godavari track (now Andhra) revolted in 1845, 1803, 1840, 1858, 1861, and 1862. They blossomed once more under Tomma Sora from 1879 to 1880. They complained about increased restrictions, being hounded by the police and moneylenders, and losing their ancient rights to forests. After Tomma Sora died, Raja Anantayyar organized a new insurrection in 1886.
- **Ahom Uprising (1828 - 1830)** - The British promised to cease their control when the first Burma War (1824–1826) ended. The British instead attempted to capture control of the Ahom provinces in Assam after the First Burma War was over. As a result, the Ahoms rebelled in 1828 under Gomdhar Konwar against the colonial government. The British finally adopted a conciliation approach and gave Maharaja Purandar Singh Narendra power over upper Assam and a few other kingdom areas.
- **Khasi Uprising (1830)** - When the Burmese war ended, the British took control of the high terrain between the Garo and Jaintia Hills. The colonial authority intended to build a route to circumnavigate the entire nation and link the Sylhet region, the Khasi area, and the Brahmaputra valley. Due to the enlistment of labourers for road construction, the Khasis upraised under the guidance of a Khasi chief named Tirut Singh. The Garo also joined them. The violent conclusion to the four-year conflict with the Khasis came in the first few months of 1833.
- **Singphos' Rebellion (1830)** - In the early 1830s, the Singphos rebelled against the Colonial Government while the British focused on defeating the threat posed by the Khasis. It took the British four months to end this insurrection finally. However, the Singphos revolted again in 1830, killing the British Political Agent with much more ferocity. The Chief of the Singphos, Nirang Phidu, also attacked the British garrison in

1843, killing many soldiers. Later in 1849, Khasma Singphos assaulted a British settlement in Assam. The British government brutally put an end to this tribal movement in the end.

## Causes of Tribal Movements in India

The main reasons for the **tribal movements in India** in the 18th and 19th centuries, were the quick changes made by the British to the economy, the government, and the land income structure. These changes upended the agrarian community, causing extreme and protracted suffering among its citizens. Following are some of the primary reasons for these tribal movements in India:

- Beyond all else, the colonial drive to increase land income and acquire as much as possible wreaked havoc on Indian villages. For instance, total income collection in West Bengal nearly doubled in less than three decades and is now more than twice what it was during the Mughals. As British rule spread across the country, other regions went through the same process, which made farmers' displeasure even worse because no money from the profits was used to improve agriculture or the welfare of farmers.
- Many farmers were forced to take on further debt or forfeit their properties due to mounting pressure from land taxes. The new landlords increased rents to crippling amounts without exercising the usual tyranny toward their employees and kicked them out if they didn't pay. This was another reason for the tribal revolts in India.
- With the influx of non-tribals into the ancestral territories of the tribal people, the idea of settled agriculture was formed. This land confiscation caused suffering for the native population.
- Agriculture, fishing, hunting, and the use of forest products have long been tribal members' rights.
- Tribal populations were exploited after the British introduced moneylenders to them. The indigenous people were forced to work as labourers due to the newly established economic framework.
- The concept of exclusive ownership has replaced the standard land ownership system that formerly existed in tribal societies.
- Utilization restrictions applied to hunting methods, shifting agriculture, and the use of forest products. The tribal people consequently lost their means of subsistence which led to the tribal movements in India.
- In contrast to orthodox culture, which was characterized by class and status disparities, tribal life was often egalitarian. Tribals were demoted to the lowest levels of society when immigrants arrived.

## Shortcomings of the Tribal Revolts in India

Even during the East India Company, there were undoubtedly numerous tribal uprisings in the 18th and 19th centuries and interruptions. The following are a few weaknesses of these tribal movements in India:

- The tribal uprisings were widespread in scope yet isolated and localized.
- They were the outcome of the issues and complaints that existed locally.
- The rebellion lacked strong leadership since its members had semi-feudal characteristics, a conventional mindset, and no viable alternative to the status quo in society.