

POL SC HELP
FYUGP Series

Peasant & Tribal Movements- Part 1 (Colonial India)

DSC3- NEW FYUGP SYLLABUS

BA HONS. POLITICAL SCIENCE 1ST SEMESTER-2022-23



DSC 3: Colonialism and Nationalism in India

Unit 1. Colonialism and Nationalism:

- Main perspectives on colonialism: Liberalism, Marxism, Postcolonialism
- Approaches to the study of nationalism in India: Nationalist, Imperialist, Marxist, and Subaltern

Unit 2. Colonial Rule in India and its impact:

- Constitutional developments and the colonial state
- Colonial ideology of civilizing mission: Utilitarians and Missionaries
- Impact on agriculture, land relations, industry and ecology

Unit 3. Reform and Resistance:

- The 1857 war of Independence
- Major social and religious movements
- Education and the rise of the new middle class

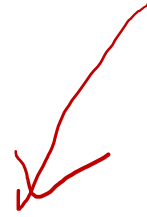
Unit 5. Social Movements

Peasants, Tribals, Workers, Women and anti-caste movements

Unit 4. Nationalist Politics and Expansion of its Social Base

- Phases of the Nationalist Movement: Liberal constitutionalist, Swadeshi and the Radicals, Formation of the Muslim League





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Social movement: Meaning & Features

- **Definitions:**

- The International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (1972) defines a social movement as a variety of collective attempts to bring about change
- 'A Social Movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into 'utopian' community.' (Paul Wilkinson in his book, Social Movements)
- a social movement is an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem they feel they share in common (Toch (1965))

- **Features:**

- Collective action by group of people
 - sustained collective mobilization through either informal or formal organization
- is deliberate, intentional, and planned in accordance with the goals and targets it aims to achieve
- is directed towards change relating to a specific issue at hand
- Most of the social movements have some ideological base
- the social movement has an organization
- Employing variety of tactics from peaceful to violent means
- Has a political nature



Main grievances of Peasants & Tribals

- New land tax rules- Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari- a heavy burden of taxes, eviction of peasants from their lands, oppression by new intermediary- Zamindars, encroachment on tribal lands.
- Promotion of British manufactured goods in Indian markets leading to destruction of Indian handloom and handicraft industries
 - Artisans becoming landless agricultural labourer- increase load on land
- Increased exploitation in rural society- Zamindars, British officials, Traders/merchants & Money Lenders
 - Exploitation now by both means- political and economic
- Expansion of British rule into tribal areas- loss of tribal people's hold over agricultural and forest land.
 - Loss of traditional tribal way of life- collectivism, egalitarianism customary rights and obligation, are distinct way of life integrated to nature
- British forest laws snatched customary rights of tribals to secondary forest produce. Big contractors and forest officials became another source of exploitation
- Troika of Zamindars, Traders, Money Lenders, and missionaries (in subtle ways) destroyed peace in rural and tribal areas



Common Features

- Mostly directed against Revenue or forest officials, Landed class, traders/merchants, money-landers
- Movements sometimes broadened its ambit to include issues beyond the immediate grievances
- Protest of the oppressed also often involved redefinition of the relationship of the oppressed to the language, culture and religion of the dominant classes. This took the form of denial of the convention of respect and submission in speech or the destruction of places of worship or of symbols of domination or oppression
- protests took varied forms in many spheres, from everyday life to organized insurgency, looting, firing, killing, guerilla warfare, etc.
- Being public and open these rebellions were political actions, different from crime
- Public or popular legitimacy- religious sanctity, God's command
- Most of them were highly localized and isolated
- Exposed the underlying tensions between class, caste or ethnic and religious groups
- As the first expression of the protest of the oppressed in the colonial period, these movements were highly significant for the national movement



Linkages of Peasant & Tribal movements to the national movement

- Gandhiji became mass leader by organising the Champaran Movement- a peasant movement ✓
- Subsequently, Gandhiji and Patelji organised Kheda and Bardoli Satyagraha respectively
- Ruination of Indian agriculture, rural industries, rural and tribal life became rallying theme against the colonial rule
- Inclusion of peasants and tribals made the national movement a mass movement- people's movement ✓
- 1857 uprisings was essentially a peasant supported movement ✓
- Peasants were the backbone of all Gandhian movement



Pros & Cons

Pros- positives

- Raised mass consciousness against the colonial rule
- made national movement a mass movement
- Peasants were the main foot soldiers of Gandhian movement
- Imagery of socio-economic arrangement of rural India post-independence
- Peasants developing into distinct political class

Cons- negatives

- Most of them were localised with narrowly defined objectives
- Most of them adopted violent means
- Many involved caste wars and communalism
- Many were externally influenced- by communists, congress, Muslim leagues, missionaries
- Not much positive impacts on social structure and exploitation in rural India



Some of the prominent peasant movements in the colonial India

- Indigo movement, Bengal- 1860
- The Deccan Riots- 1875
- Champaran Movement - 1917
- Kheda Satyagraha- 1918
- Bardoli Satyagraha- 1928
- Tebhaga Movement- 1946-47
- Telengana Movement- 1946-52



Some of the prominent tribal movements in the colonial India

- Pahariya Revolt- 1778- Jharkhand
- Birsa Munda movement (Ulgulan)- Jharkhand- 1890s
- Santhal Movement – Santhal pargana- Jharkhand- 1855-56
- Moplah Rebellion-1921
- Kol Movement -1829-1839
- Bhil movement- 1818-1831
- Khond Uprising, Odisha- 1837




The Indigo Movement

- **Timeline:** 1859-60
- **Location-Areas** affected:
 - arose in Nadia district of Bengal, entire Bengal province was affected
- **Main Grievances:**
 - Forced plantation, by European planters, of Indigo
 - Very low rates of Indigo produce
 - Loss of soil fertility, force, extortion, and exploitation by the planters,
- **Events/Features**
 - Peasants refused to grow indigo
 - The revolt got support from Zamindars, Bengali intelligentsia, Muslims and the missionaries.
 - Dinabandhu Mitra wrote Nildarpan in Bengali which highlighted the plight of the Indigo peasants.
- **Outcomes/Impacts**
 - The indigo riots forced the Government to set up an official enquiry (1860).
 - A notification was issued which stated that farmers could not be forced to grow indigo.
 - The movement also knocked down the Indigo plantation system in lower Bengal, forcing the planters to shift to Bihar
 - It influenced the later Champaran Movement led by Gandhiji; also highlighted the oppressive and exploitative nature of the British Rule



The Deccan Riots

- **Timeline:** 1870s- 1875 ✓
- **Location-Areas** affected:
 - Poona, many areas of Bombay Presidency, Karnataka
- **Main Grievances:** 
 - Excessive land tax under the Ryotwari system
 - Exploitation and coercion by troika of Revenue officials, merchants, money-lenders
 - Eviction from land- loss of tenancy rights
 - Bust of Cotton Boom of 1860
- **Events/Features**
 - Peasants socially boycotted the moneylenders, burnt and destroyed their account books, and resorted to violence
 - Vanis (village moneylenders) vs the Kunbis (cultivator caste)- caste war
 - Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (M G Ranade) supported the peasants
- **Outcomes/Impacts**
 - Deccan Riots Commission was set up which presented a report to the British Parliament in 1878.
 - In 1879, the Agriculturists Relief Act was passed which ensured that the farmers could not be arrested and imprisoned if they were unable to pay their debts.



Peasant movements under Congress/Gandhi Leadership

- **Champaran Movement (1917)**

- Gandhiji led the movement to protest the exploitation of Indigo farmers of Champaran, Bihar
- In June 1917, the Government appointed an enquiry committee with Gandhiji as one of the members.
- The enactment of the Champaran Agrarian Act, 1918 freed the tenants from the special imposts levied by the indigo planters.

- **Kheda Satyagraha (1918)**

- Against no land tax waiver by Govt despite failed crop in Kheda, Gujarat
- Gandhiji along with Sardar Vallabhai Patel supported the peasants, who did satyagraha for rent remission
- Finally, The Government had to agree to the demands of the peasants.

- **Bardoli Satyagraha (1928)**

- Against excessive land tax(increased by 30%) by Govt in Bardoli district of Gujarat
- Led by Vallabhai Patel, No-Revenue Campaign was launched
- An enquiry committee was set up, which came to the conclusion that the increase had been unjustified and reduced the enhancement to 6.03%



The Tebhaga Movement

- **Timeline:** 1946-47
- **Location-Areas** affected:
 - arose in North Bengal and included the districts of Dinaipur and Rangpur in East Bengal and Jalpaiguri and Malda in West Bengal; epicenter was- Dinajpu, Midnapur and 24-Parganas
- **Main Grievances:**
 - Excessive land tax(50 %) by the Jotedars (landed class below Zamindars)
 - No tenancy rights to actual tillers- bagraders
 - Bengal Famine of 1943
 - Main demand: ' Tebhaga' (two thirds share of crops) for the sharecroppers and land to the tiller
- **Events/Features**
 - bargardars refused to pay half share of crop to the jotedars, resisted arrest and police actions, took arms and fired & killed
 - tebhaga elaka and tebhaga committees were set up for the governance of the area locally
 - The movement was supported and organized by communist cadres of the Bengal Provincial Krishak Sabha.
- **Outcomes/Impacts**
 - 40% of the sharecropping peasants got tebhaga right granted willingly by the landholders
 - Influenced the passage of the east bengal state acquisition and tenancy act of 1950
 - Led to abolition of the zamindari System



Telangana Movement

- **Timeline:** 1946-52
- **Location**-Areas affected:
 - present day Telangana state and rest while areas under nizam of Hyderabad
 - Started in Nalgonda district in 1946 which spread to the neighboring Warangal and Bidar districts, and then to entire Telangana region
- **Main Grievances:**
 - Excessive land tax under the Jagirdari system ; Main demand: writing off of peasants' debt.
 - extra-economic coercion known as vetti (forced labour) and Bhagela by the jagirdar and deshmukh, locally known as dora
 - money lenders cum-village officials joined the Jagirdars in exploiting poor peasants
- **Events/Features**
 - peasants formed an army and started fighting guerilla wars
 - set up their own 'People's Committees'. These 'Committees' took over land, maintained their own army and own administration
 - The armed resistance continued until 1950 and was finally crushed by the Indian army
 - Razakars, a private militia, organized by Qasim Razvi to support the Nizam, brutally started crushing the armed revolts by the peasants
 - The movement was supported and organized by communist cadres
- **Outcomes/Impacts**
 - Not any tangible gains
 - Thousands of communists and peasants were killed
 - But it remained most revolutionary and violent peasant movement which might have influenced Naxalite movements in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana later on



Probable Questions

- Write short notes describing any two radical peasant movements in the colonial India.
- Describe any two prominent tribal movements in the colonial India.
- Elaborate the changing pattern of agrarian structure and peasant movements in colonial India.
- Discuss the causes, impacts, and reasons for the peasant and tribal movements during the colonial period
- How peasant and tribal movements were linked to the national movement



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