Volume 2; Issue 2
April to Jun 2026

E-ISSN: 3049-1134

International Journal of Political Studies

Quarterly International Research Journal

International Journal of Political Studies
E-ISSN: 3049-1134
https://www.polsci.in
Volume 2; Issue 2; April-Jun 2026; Page No. 1-16
Peer Reviewed, Indexed and Refereed Journal

Peasant Resistance and Farmers' Movements in India: Continuity and Change

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Abstract

This paper examines the historical evolution of peasant and farmers' movements in India from the colonial period to the emergence of the new farmers' movements in the post-independence era. Agrarian unrest in India has been deeply rooted in exploitative land revenue systems, unequal agrarian relations, and the socio-economic hardships imposed upon cultivators under colonial rule. The study traces the development of various agrarian struggles, including the Santhal Rebellion, Indigo Revolt, Pabna Uprising, Deccan Riots, Moplah Rebellion, Telangana Movement, and Tebhaga Movement, highlighting their causes, leadership patterns, and socio-political significance. It explores how colonial land settlements such as the Zamindari, Ryotwari, and Mahalwari systems intensified peasant exploitation and contributed to widespread resistance. The paper further analyzes the role of nationalist organizations, Mahatma Gandhi, the All-India Kisan Sabha, and communist-led mobilizations in transforming localized agrarian protests into organized political movements. The post-independence period witnessed significant agrarian reforms and rural development initiatives that reduced the frequency of large-scale peasant uprisings. However, the Green Revolution introduced new economic challenges, leading to the emergence of farmers' movements focused on remunerative prices, input costs, subsidies, and market policies. Organizations such as the Bharatiya Kisan Union, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, and Shetkari Sanghatana played a pivotal role in articulating farmers' demands. The study

concludes that agrarian movements in India have evolved from struggles against feudal and colonial oppression to movements seeking economic justice and policy reforms within a democratic framework. These movements continue to influence agrarian politics and rural development in contemporary India.

Key words: Farmers, Movement, Resistance, Agrarian Issues, Distress, Revolt.

1. Introduction

The peasants periodically raised up their voice against the lords and governments that imposed taxes and rent and other forms of uneven economic exchange. However, the potential for peasant rebellions and political organizing, in general, is often weakened by internal competition and distrust which is the result of struggle for scarce resources within peasant communities. Because of this reason, Karl Marx referred peasants as "potatoes in a sack" implying that they were too individualistically oriented to organize as revolutionaries. But peasantries have on a number of occasions been involved in large-scale regional and national rebellions and revolutions. For example, from 1524 to 1526 German peasants in Franconia, Swabia and Thuringia joined with impoverished town dwellers (many of whom were no doubt of peasant origin) to mount the "Peasant War" to redress exploitive relations with non- peasants. (Kearny, 2008)

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, historical, and descriptive research methodology to examine the evolution of peasant and farmers' movements in India from the colonial period to the post-independence era. The research is primarily based on secondary sources of data, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, historical records, published research studies, and archival materials related to agrarian relations and rural social movements in India.

The study employs the historical method to trace the origin, development, and transformation of agrarian movements across different periods. It examines the socio-economic and political conditions that gave rise to peasant rebellions during colonial rule and analyzes the changing nature of farmers' mobilization in the post-independence period. Particular attention is paid to major agrarian movements such as the Santhal Rebellion, Indigo Revolt, Deccan Riots, Moplah Rebellion, Telangana Movement, Tebhaga

Movement, and the New Farmers' Movements that emerged after the Green Revolution.

A descriptive and analytical approach has been used to interpret the causes, objectives, leadership patterns, strategies, and outcomes of these movements. The collected literature has been critically reviewed and thematically analyzed to identify continuities and changes in agrarian protests over time. The study also draws upon concepts from agrarian studies and social movement theory to understand the relationship between agrarian structures, state policies, and collective action.

By relying on documentary evidence and historical analysis, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of agrarian movements and their significance in shaping rural politics and agrarian policy in India.

3. Discussion and Analysis

3.1 Colonial Rule and Peasants Resistance

The British occupation of India for nearly two centuries brought about profound changes in almost all sectors of the Indian society including the agrarian sectors. After securing the *diwani* rights of Bengal in 1765, the administrators of British East India Company primarily worked to enlarge the company's revenue which was reflected in their land policy and settlements. (Dhangare, 1983)

The company administration followed a different kind of agricultural arrangements for the different areas for revenue collection due to its convenience and regional situations. In the permanent settlement of Bengal the *zamindars* were declared the full and permanent owners of the land. In the Northern parts of Madras and in the Oudh almost similar system was followed. The *zamindars* were the key link between the authority and the peasants. The permanent settlement was injustice to the peasants because it reduced them to a position of mere tenants on their own fields. The *zamindars* had to make nine-tenth of the produce to the company administration and be contented with the tenth. The defaulter *zamindars* that could not pay the revenue on the demands of administration were dispossessed and replaced with the new *zamindars.* The *zamindars* having been left free to make term with their tenants and therefore imposed a number of illegal taxes resulted in the oppression of peasantry. (Majmudar, 1993)

The company administration has followed a different form of agricultural arrangements due to different reasons which is known as *raiyatwari* in certain areas like Madras and Bombay

presidency. Under this system the landholders of land were recognized as its proprietors. The *raiyat* or landholder was a tenant of the state and paid revenue directly to the state. The assessment of revenue was fixed initially but in the Bombay presidency it was revisable periodically. The terms and conditions of the state to the *raiyat* were very hard and a result of it a number of them turned to be rent farmers, sub- tenants and share-croppers. Another kind of land settlement is called the *mahalwari* system. According to this system a village is considered unit of tenure and assessment. It was adopted in the United Provinces (excluding Oudh), Punjab and the central provinces. A number of villages inhabited by members of single caste, kinship, lineage or tribe and the cultivation on land was done on the co-sharing basis. (Sen, 1979)

The peasantry was the most suffering of the exploitation of colonial rule. The peasants formed the backbone of the civil rebellions which were often led by the *zamindars* and petty chieftains. This was true of the 1857 revolt. Another set of peasant's revolt took place on the religious, social reform and purification basis having their origin from the peasantry and targeted the new *zamindars*, landlords, and money- lenders. In the end they clashed with British imperialism. (Chandra, 1972)

All the agrarian classes in India were distressed by the government's high revenue demands although the economic burden was greater on the lower strata of peasantry. Either the peasants (actual cultivators) revolted against these oppressors- the landlords and sometimes all the agrarian classes joined together and rebelled against the severe demands of the state. A series of tribal uprisings occurred in tribal regions during the first half of the nineteenth century. Among the major peasant's revolt during that took place during the colonial rule were the mutiny of 1857, the Moplah rebellion of 1836 and 1896, and the Santal and Munda revolts of 1890. Towards the close of colonial rule two major upheavals took place. These were the Tebhaga movement in Bengal in 1946 and the Telengana uprising in Andhara in 1946-48. (Vishvanath,1990).

The Santhal rebellion of 1855-56 was one of the tribal rebellions. It was a tribal unrest spread to Birbhum, Barikura, Singhhum, Hazaribagh, Bhagalpur and Monghyr and was mainly directed against the money lenders, despotic British revenue system, usury practices and the zamindari system in India by the Santhal people. The main causes of this rebellion were the appropriation of land at large scale to recover the revenue dues and the land transfers to the urban money- lenders though the question of ethnic tribal

identity which had been losing with the implementation of the policies of British authority was also become a guiding force for this. (Sen, 1982)

The discontent of the Indian farmers in general and the farmers of Oudh (Uttar Pradesh) in response to the revenue policies appeared during the mutiny of 1857.The liquidation of the landed aristocracy in Oudh U.P under the principle of British paramountcy was one of the most important and immediate cause of 1857 revolts. But the participation of the peasant masses in the revolt was either at the behest of their caste superiority or due to ethnic and religious royalties to their chiefs, *rajas* and lords. The districts which were violent in 1857 uprising particularly all rural classes had been disturbed by the British land revenue policy and administration. During the 1840-1857 the transfer of land from the cultivating to non-cultivating classes of money lenders had increased to a great extent. In addition to it the evictions and imposition of levies and taxes by corrupt revenue officials had steadily originated and enhanced the tension. (Dhangare, 1979)

3.2 Mahatma Gandhi and Changing Nature of the Peasants Movement

During the phase from 1857 to the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the national scene, the peasant movements continued to be sporadic. Their caste and community character also remained almost unchanged. Such revolts are the Pabna riots (1873-76), the Deccan uprising (Maharashtra) and the Moplah uprising. The peasants' position rapidly deteriorated due to exploitation by the intermediary classes like the landlords, the merchants and the moneylenders, commercialization of crops, destruction of handicrafts, exodus of bullion, creation of property rights in land and gradual increase in population. A significant feature of this phase is that the peasant movements could not secure proper leadership. After the revolt of 1857, the government of India adopted a policy of collaboration with the conservative classes such as landlords, princes and priests for the perpetuation of their empire in India. The peasants were deprived of the natural leadership of the local elites. (Singh, 1991)

There was certain shift in the nature of peasant resistance to the British rule after 1858. The peasants started to fight directly for peasant demands and against the government, the foreign planters and the indigenous *zamindars* and moneylenders. (Chandra, 2000)

The Deccan Riots of 1857 took place in Maharashtra in some parts of Pune, Satara and Nagar districts against increased agrarian distress. The British

introduced *raiyatwari* system for revenue collection under which the landholders were directly responsible to pay the revenue to the state. In the same manner they sought credit individually from the moneylender. The *Vanis,* was a caste of merchants and money lenders who provided credit in the Deccan villages. The cultivators belonged to the caste kunbi which were numerically dominant caste in these areas and controlled the village *panchyats* before the introduction of new civil and criminal courts when they lost their traditional political power. On the other hand, the revenue demands were very high and cultivators had to take credit to meet the demands of high revenue. The poor *kunbis* suffered most due to rising cost of living, low wages; poor crop yields bad seasons and harvests, the agriculture depression and the increased revenue rates. The *Vanis* became very powerful economically and occupied the land of the defaulter *Kunbis.* Before the broke out of riots between *Kunbis* and *Vanis* certain rich *Kunbi* families launched constitutional agitation (social boycott of the moneylenders) because of the deteriorating agrarian relations in the western Maharashtra. The poor *Kunbis* followed the lead of the rich and middle *kunbis* for some time. In 1875 the riots of poor *Kunbis* broke out and spread over wide area. The government tried to suppress the rights forcefully with repressive measures. (Naidu, 1994)

The Indigo Revolt (1859) was an uprising of peasants against the Indigo planters that arose in Bengal. The Europeans had the monopoly on the Indigo cultivation in the certain areas of Bengal. The European planters forced the peasants to cultivate indigo under harsher terms and conditions. The sale of indigo was highly profitable to the planters and the terms under which the peasants had to grow it involved great losses for them. The peasants were compelled to grow indigo in place of other crops. The colonial government was sympathetic to the foreign planters. The peasant's revolt started in 1859 and a number of farmers denied to cultivate indigo and resisted the physical brutality and violence of the planters. (Natrajan, 1979)

The Pabna peasant uprising was the resistance of the cultivators against the lords of the lands in Bengal in Yusufshahi, Parganah, situated in the Serajunge sub-division of the district of Pabna during 1873-76. This movement conducted by a well-organized agrarian league named as Pabna Raiyat League created the conditions for the launching of similar agrarian movements in other parts of Eastern and Central Bengal in the decade. (Gupta, 1979)

The Moplahas were poor, illiterate

and unskilled peasants, landless laborers and collies speaking Malayali language. They belonged to a mixed race originated from the Arab traders and local women. The Moplah revolts have occurred even before British took over control of Malabar in 1872. These revolts had their origin in land distribution rights and tenancy system. (Naidu,1994) The Mapplia peasants of Malabar (North Kerala) were oppressed by the *jenmis* (landlords) through different measures. These peasants organized twenty-two rebellions from 1836 to 1854. The agrarian relations between landlords and poor peasants remained discriminative and exploitative in favor of the landlords instead of the numerous efforts of the contemporary rulers and Mapplia peasant's discontent raising times and again due to this reason. During the period of 1873 to 1880 there were five major outbreaks in the Malabar against the tyranny of landlords. (Chandra, 2000)

The colonial government had many rules through regulations related to the agrarian relations between 1887 and 1901 but had not touched the basic issue of land occupancy rights. The power struggle in this period benefited politically landlords but the condition of poor Moplas steadily deteriorated due to their political isolation. In this situation the rebellious activities of the Moplahs resumed. In 1896 another rebellion occurred in which the Mophlas killed the Hindu landlords, looted their houses, forcibly converted Hindus to Islam and burnt temples. From 1880 the government provided a number of educational and employment policies for their development. In spite of these facilities the pressure on land increased which resulted into the pushed evictions, rack renting, heavy lease renewal fees and poor compensation for tenants' improvements to a peak level. The position of peasants in such a situation got poor and desperate. As a result, Moplah rebellion occurred in 1921. The main grievances of the tenants were increase in rent and evictions. This rebellion was against the landlords and government. The agitations gave opportunity to Molaph peasantry to raise their economic grievances and distress and demonstrate their religious identity. (Naidu, 1994)

3.3 Institutionalization of the Peasants Movement

With the beginning of the 20the century, the Indian National Congress began to champion the cause of the oppressed peasants. It imparted a political significance a common cause with the nationwide freedom movement and anti-imperialist bias into every one of the struggles that peasants had to wage in order to free themselves from new

imperialist impositions and machinations. Thus, country wide campaigns were organized with nationalism as their dynamic and economic pressure as their propellers against the vicious indenture labor system, control labor in plantations, exploitation by European planters in India.

With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the national scene an entirely new dynamic and political revolutionary tendency came to be imparted into peasant struggles. He familiarized the Kaira in Gujarat with the new weapon of Satyagraha, an open non-violent organized, politically alive revolt against injustice in their struggle against the indigo planters and land revenue collectors respectively. He introduced the technique of first enquiring into the essential facts of the peasants' grievances and then formulating their demands. He believed in educating the peasants about nature and level of their problem and immediate demands, training them in the art of internal self-sufficiency. (Ranga, 1981)

Congress initiated the process of the redresses of the grievances and it formed various peasant committees in rural areas. However, the peasant movements initiated by the Congress were invariably restricted to seeking relief against the excessive rates of land revenue and were in no case directed against the *zamindars.* The Congress policy of safeguarding the interests of *zamindars* and landlords led to the emergence of independent class organizations of *Kissans* in rural India. The radical sections felt that to protect the interests of the *Kissans,* their own class organizations and leadership must be evolved. Consequently, the Kissan organizations came into existence in different parts of the country. The first Kissan Congress held at Lucknow in 1935 led to the formation of All India Kisan Sabha. The programme of the Kissan Sabha reflected the aspirations and needs of the entire peasantry in the agrarian India. The all-India Kissan Sabha was composed of radical petty bourgeois individuals, within and outside the Indian National Congress. It was also supported and strengthened by Congress socialist party and later on Communist Party of India. A number of significant struggles were launched by the Kissan Sabha in different parts of the country during the initial period of their inception. The Telengana struggle (1946-50) was one of the important struggles launched by the Kissan Sabh. (Mehta, 1981)

The Telengana struggle started in 1946 against the feudal lords. It was a movement of peasants and laborers against the local feudal lords. The agitation led by the communists and became successful in taking over 3000 villages from the feudal lords and 10, 00,000 acres of agriculture

land and this land was distributed to landless peasants. The communist party has increased its influence among the poor peasants, tenant-cultivators and landless laborers. The peasants' resistance and militant action against landlords and village officials were spread to the large area and was completely under the control of communists.

On the other hand, in the same time the Tebhaba Movement (1946-1947) was led by the Bengal Kissan Sabha (BKS) and in the process of mobilization agricultural laborers, sharecroppers and poor peasants in the form of tenants of various category became the driving force against the *jotedars, zamindars*, moneylenders, traders and the British bureaucracy. It was a movement by the sharecroppers for securing Tebhaga (two- third share) of their produce for themselves. The sharecroppers demanded to reduce the share of *jotedars* (a class of rich farmers) who held superior rights of land) from one- half to one-third. There were successive crop failures from 1938-1942-43. There were numerous natural calamities like floods, famine and disease from 1941to 1945. Although the economic condition of the bargadars (sharecroppers) were worsened because of these reasons but they had to surrender half of their produce to the landowners. In 1946 the BKS passed a resolution in Calcutta for Tebhaga according to which two-third of the produced crops would go the landlord. (Dhanagare, 1979)

3.4 Political Parties and Farmers Mobilization

The farmer movements have been led by political parties and non-political organizations. Before independence, many political parties organized farmer wings to enlist their support mostly for electoral purpose. The Communist movement took the lead during pre-independence period through Kisan Sabha movement in 1936. The other organizations are Bharat Krishak Samaj established in 1954 by Congress party, Bhartiya Kisan Sangh formed in 1974. It is affiliated with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and a member of the Sangh Parivar. Some of the leading militant farmer organizations include Bhartiya Kisan Sangh set up in Rajasthan in 1978, Bhartiay Kisan Union started in U.P in 1979, Tamil Nadu Agriculturists Association commenced in 1966, Shetkari Sanghatana in 1982 in Maharashtra, Karnatka Rajya Rytha Sangha (Karnataka State farmers Association) in 1982 in Karnataka State, Bhartiya Kisan Sangh and Khadut Samanvay Samithi in Gujarat, Punjab Khetibari Zamindar Union in 1972 which latter on converted into Punjab unit of Bharatiya Kisan Union in 1980 and Fruit Growers Association in

Himachal Pradesh in 1980. (Naidu, 1994)

The years since independence have seen agrarian struggles of enormous variety, arranging from the legendary Telengana peasant movement and the PEPSU tenants movement which continued from the pre-independence years to the Naxalilite movement in the late sixties and the new farmers' movements of the eighties. Interspersed in between were many lesser-known struggles such as the Kharwar tribals movement in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar in 1957-58, the Bhils movement in Dhulia in Maharashtra from 1967-75, or the Warlis' struggle led by the Kashtakad Sanghatna headed by the Marxist Jeuist Pradeep Prabhu since 1978. SSP and SPS launched a land grab movement in 1970, as did CPI. In Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, peasants protested against betterment levies imposed for covering costs of irrigation schemes, for better prices for crops and other similar issues. The Communist Party of India set up the first nationwide agricultural labour organization, Bhartiya Khet Mazdoor Union, in Moga in 1968. In Tanjore and Kerala, movements of agricultural labour and tenants took place, as did numerous others all over the country. (Chandra, & Mukherji, 2000)

In the beginning years after independence India adopted planned economic development in 1951 and the model of mixed economy was adopted. There have not been any major peasant revolts, rebellions or protest movements except the Naxalite movement and the Land-grab movement in Bihar and UP that began in 1960's. The Naxalite movement is still continuing with its numerous internal ideological differences and factional trends in different parts of India. In the beginning the Naxalites started only to secure permanent occupancy rights for the *bargadars* (sharecroppers) in the Naxalbari sub-division of Jalpaigury district of West Bengal. In the present time the movement has spread practically over most of the major states of India. The Naxalites have been mobilizing the marginalized and oppressed people ranging from Adivasis (tribal), Dalits, bounded labourers, agricultural labourers and women whose voices remained suppressed so far. The Naxalite leadership gives call for a 'fight to the finish' and openly advocates the use of violence against the 'perceived class enemy'. On the other hand, the Land-Grab movement was a short-lived micro level process. It was a militant action programme in which participants forcibly took possession of lands they identified as the surplus land with absentee landlords above the land ceiling limit permitted by law. Neither of the movements brought any policy or institutional change. The Booda (gifting

land) movement is another movement which is considered important in this period which was led by the Vinoba Bhave in Telengana during (1946-51). Vinoba Bhave received voluntary land donations during his *Padyatra* (the long march) that started in Telengana district and later went to other parts of India. It was joined by his Ghandian followers. The Indian states passed the legislation for the distribution of Bhoodan land and the respective state governments constituted Bhoodan committees for supervising the act of land distribution. Besides these movements there was not any major movement in India during the 1952-1975. (Shigaroy, 2004)

There may be certain reasons for the factor which were resulted out mostly due to the efforts of the Indian state. The agrarian societies in India underwent a rapid process of transformation over the years. The state started a number of institutional measures through the five years plans to take the benefits to rural India especially to those engaged in land cultivation and the landless. Firstly, the reform legislations were passed by the Congress government for the abolition of *zagirdari-zamindari* systems and for 'the land to the tiller' No doubt these legislations could not be applied evenly in all the states due to regional and structural reasons. [35] Another major institutional measure introduced by the Indian government was the Community Development Programmes as part of the five years plans. A number of welfare schemes for improvement in rural literacy, education, health, agriculture, irrigation, rural infrastructure like roads, transport and electricity have been launched by the government. In addition to it a variety of cultural activities for villagers, both men and women were also implemented by the Block Development Officers. Although the Community Development Programme could not be successful to the expected level due to a number of shortcomings yet it remained successful to satisfy the needs of rural population to some extent. (Dhangare,1979)

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At the time of independence, India was facing the acute food shortages. To meet the challenges of food sufficiency the Indian government launched what is known as the green revolution during the 1960's. It implied the introduction of high yielding varieties of seeds, extensive use of farm machinery, energized well irrigation and use of high doses of new chemical fertilizers and pesticides. All these measures were aimed at improving food production. The Green Revolution showed the rays of hope to the farmers and government of India both. No doubt the food production increased to the large extent but at the same time the farmers began to experience despair after some time. The agricultural productivity increased remarkably but the agricultural profitability declined sharply. The farmers became increasingly dependent not only on the market but also on the government which practically had monopoly control over fixing agricultural support prices. This led to the shared frustration and collective discontent among the farmers. The social inequalities and the rural poverty were on the rise due to the mechanization and market dependency of the agriculture. In the background of these factors the new farmers' movements in India came into being. (Shigaroy, 2004)

3.5 New Farmers Movement

The new farmers' movements in India began in the 1970s'in the parts of Tamilnadu and Punjab. In the late 1970s' they had emerged strongly in parts of Maharashtra, Uttar Predesh (particularly the west), Karnatka and Gujrat. The price and related issues became the focus of the process of mobilization and rural agitation via non-party movements. These movements involved farmers rather than peasants. The farmers are distinguished on the basis of market involvement both as commodity producers and the purchasers of inputs. The farmers entirely depend on the market to sell their produce and

purchase inputs required for the mechanized agriculture after the introduction of green revolution. In 1980s' they became powerful force and employed the distinguish methods for mobilizing the peasants like *rasta rook* and *rail roko* (blocking of roads and rail), and *gavbandi* (refusing politicians and bureaucrats entry to villages. (Brass, 2016)

Dhanagare stated certain notable features of the new farmers' movement. Prior to the 1950 the peasants' movements primarily confined to the specific regions, districts or one or two states in India, the new farmers' movements mobilized support from all over India with few exceptions of Kerela, West Bengal and North-east. The new farmers' movements had uniform demand for cost- based agricultural prices for the farm produce and other related economic demands of the farmers like reduction in electricity tariffs, diesel prices, supply of subsidized seeds and fertilizers, loan waivers, removal of zone restrictions on the movement of farm produce to market it outside the state etc. The pre 1950 movements of peasantry were against landlordism by the tenants or by the sharecroppers and landless laborers against landowners for denying them appropriate share of the produce or wages for their labor. The leadership of the new farmers' movement came from among the farmers themselves and at least some leaders are intellectuals. They had the capacity to articulate the farmers' demands ideologically and also to justify them theoretically. (Shigaroy, 2004)

The first movement in the series of new farmers' movement started in early 1970s' in the Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu. The rich farmers in this area have turned to cash crops and their income dropped due to the lower prices of agricultural produce and rising wages of agricultural labor on which rich farmers increasingly dependent. The agitation was against the government under the leadership of Narayanaswamy Naidu, the Tamilaga Vyavasayagal Sangham (the Tamilnadu Agriculturist Association (TNAA), the farmers' organization launched agitation in 1973. It demanded the reduction in the electricity tariffs. In the same time the mobilization of farmers took place in Punjab, Haryana, and western part of UP under the banner of BKU (Bhartiya Kissan Union), a non-political farmers' organization. The main reason for farmers' discontent was the prices they received for their farm produce were far lower than the input prices. The farmers' movement in Karnatka in the early eighties was led by the (KRRS) Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sabha an organization based in Shimga (one of the districts in the state). The KRRS criticized

the capitalism and imperialism which it considered responsible for declining the agricultural productivity in the Third World Countries. (Desai ,1979

The Shetkari Sanghatan launched a major agitation in Maharashtra for the remunerative prices for onion in early 1980'. The modern techniques of mobilization like *rasta roko* (blocked the road) and *rail roko* (blocked railway tracks) have been adopted initially but latter on the farmers decided to withheld the onion crop from the market as a method of protest and the villages were closed to government officials and politicians *(gavband*). Shard Joshi gave a very simple and powerful slogan that is Bharat against India. Bharat is the indigenous name for India with the positive connotations while India is the westernized name symbolizing exploitation. These two terms used for the rural and urban- industrial populations respectively. Joshi himself stated that the real contradiction is not in the village, not between big peasants and small, not between the landowners and landless but between the agrarian population as a whole and a rest of the society.

The mobilization of the rural women was a remarkable feature of the Shetkari Sanghathna and formulated a women wing namely Shetkari Mahila Aghadi (women's front of the Shetkari Sanghatana). The main demand of the women organization is that women should have equal rights to land or property and there have been attempts to make farmers transfer a part of their land to their wives. (Lindberg,1995) In this manner the farmers movement in India is the response to the different socio, economic and political patterns in different periods of time.

4. Conclusion

The history of peasant and farmers' movements in India reflects the persistent struggle of agrarian communities against various forms of economic exploitation, social injustice, and political marginalization. During the colonial period, oppressive land revenue systems, exploitative agrarian relations, forced cultivation, indebtedness, and the activities of landlords and moneylenders created widespread discontent among peasants. Consequently, numerous revolts and uprisings emerged across different regions of the country, including the Santhal Rebellion, Indigo Revolt, Deccan Riots, Moplah Rebellion, Telangana Struggle, and Tebhaga Movement. Although these movements differed in their immediate objectives and organizational structures, they collectively challenged the exploitative foundations of colonial agrarian administration.

The nationalist movement and the emergence of organizations such as the All-India Kisan Sabha provided a broader political platform for peasant mobilization. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi introduced new methods of resistance based on non-violence and mass participation, while socialist and communist organizations emphasized class-based mobilization. These developments transformed agrarian protests from localized uprisings into organized socio-political movements with wider national significance.

Following independence, land reforms, community development programmes, and welfare initiatives contributed to reducing the intensity of traditional peasant rebellions. However, structural problems within agriculture persisted. The Green Revolution, while increasing agricultural production, also generated new forms of dependence on markets, technology, and state policies. As a result, a new phase of farmers' movements emerged, focusing on issues such as remunerative prices, input costs, subsidies, electricity tariffs, credit facilities, and market access. Organizations such as the Bharatiya Kisan Union, Shetkari Sanghatana, and Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha became influential voices of rural interestsOverall, agrarian movements in India demonstrate the dynamic relationship between agriculture, politics, and social change. Their evolution from anti-colonial resistance to democratic pressure groups highlights the continuing relevance of collective action in addressing the challenges faced by rural communities and ensuring agrarian justice in a rapidly changing economy.

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