



Sambhav-2025

Day 30: Peasant movements in India were influenced by colonial exploitation, agrarian hardships, and the impact of nationalist ideologies. Discuss. (250 words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

Approach

- Start with a brief overview of the Peasant movements in India
- Mention the influence of colonial exploitation, agrarian hardships, and the impact of nationalist ideologies in shaping these movements.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Peasant movements in India during the colonial period were largely driven by colonial exploitation, agrarian distress, and the rise of nationalist ideologies. These movements reflected the struggle of Indian peasants to assert their rights against British economic policies, social inequities, and exploitation by landlords.

Body

Colonial Exploitation and Peasant Movement: Colonial exploitation played a pivotal role in shaping peasant movements.

- **British land revenue systems** like the **Permanent Settlement of 1793** in Bengal and the **Ryotwari System** in South India had severe consequences for peasants.
 - These systems fixed land taxes, regardless of the agricultural output, leading to economic burdens on peasants who were already struggling.
- **The Deccan Riots of 1875** in Maharashtra were a result of excessive moneylending and debt, where peasants were exploited by moneylenders and faced ruin due to high-interest loans.

Agrarian Hardships and the Rise of Peasant Movements: Peasants in India faced severe hardships due to colonial policies, such as high taxes, famine, debt, and the promotion of cash crop farming.

The British focus on commercial crops like indigo, cotton, and opium led to food scarcity and made peasants vulnerable to price fluctuations.

- **The Indigo Revolt (1859-60)** in Bengal was a direct result of exploitative practices by the British planters who forced peasants to grow indigo instead of food crops, resulting in economic hardship.
- **The Bardoli Satyagraha (1928)** in Gujarat was another significant movement triggered by agrarian distress. The British administration raised land revenue taxes during a period of famine and crop failure.
 - Under the leadership of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the peasants of Bardoli refused to pay the increased taxes, leading to a successful non-violent agitation that resulted in the return of the land and the remission of taxes.

Influence of Nationalist Ideologies on Peasant Movements: The link between agrarian struggles and the broader independence movement gave peasants a platform to challenge colonial policies.

- Gandhi's intervention in **the Champaran Satyagraha (1917)** was a political and moral campaign, which gave the peasants a platform to **challenge colonial rule** and the system of **indigo cultivation**.
- **The Kisan Sabha Movements (1930s)**, particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, aligned agrarian demands with anti-colonial sentiments.
 - These movements, led by socialist leaders like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, advocated for land reforms and better wages while also promoting the idea of self-rule (Swaraj).

Conclusion

Colonial policies of land revenue and exploitation created a fertile ground for resistance, while nationalist leaders used these movements to mobilize peasants as active participants in the independence struggle. These movements thus played a crucial role in challenging both colonial rule and socio-economic inequalities.

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