



Mains Marathon

Day 47: Discuss the post-independence farmers' movements in India. (150 words)

26 Aug 2022 | GS Paper 1 | History

Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Write a brief introduction about the causes of the farmers' movement after independence.
- Discuss the wide spectrum of farmers' movement and its impact.
- Write a fair conclusion.

Answer:

It was obvious that with the termination of colonial rule, the character and nature of the peasant or farmers' movement underwent sea change. Post-independent India saw broadly two kinds of peasant or farmers' struggles in the recent past.

- Peasant movements led by Marxist and Socialists- such as **Telangana Movement (1946-51), Tebagma movement (1946-1949), Kagodu Satyagraha (1951), Naxalbari Movement (1967) and Lalgarh movement (2009)**.
- The Farmers' movement was led by rich farmers in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat.

The introduction of the green revolution, new technology, government subsidies etc. has created several categories such as rich farmers and poor farmers. The latter movement comes closer to the Gandhian movement of yesteryears. This is because of the fact that the strategies that they resorted to, methodologies that they adopted, the politics that they played, the analysis that they made including the conceptualizing of some of their struggles, had the bearing of the Gandhian Movement. Even some organizations in the 'New Farmers' Movement such as the one in Karnataka vouched for Gandhism openly.

The beginning of the New Farmers' Movement in general is seen from the decade of the 1980s. However, its genesis requires it to be stretched back to the earlier decade of 1970s. This was the decade when farmers of green revolution area began to rally around political parties and leaders. One such leader who organized the farmers under a political party was Chaudhury Charan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India. He organized few rallies raising such issues as parity in prices between industrial and agricultural commodities; allowing import of agricultural input from abroad, reducing the protection given to industry, due representation of farmers in different boards and committees, subsidies to electricity, water fertilizer, seeds, reducing the income disparity between the urban and rural people, establishing Kisan Banks as well as agricultural polytechnics etc. During the same decade, farmers in Punjab organized struggles under Khetkari Zamindari Union. In 1974, the word Zamindari was dropped from the organisation. Incidentally,

the same Union became part of Bharatiya Kisan Union during the next decade. However, till the end of 1970s, its demands varied between increasing revenue tax and defective Farmers' Movements 91 92 Non-Violent Movements after Gandhi tractors. Some of the most important struggles that were carried till the beginning of 1980s were:

- Anti-Single Food Zone, 1972
- Struggle against Power Tariff, 1975
- Struggle against increasing water rates, increasing commercial tax, 1975
- Agitation against defective tractors, 1977
- Diesel Morcha, 1979

However, one should not overlook the contribution of Narayana Swamy Naidu of Tamil Nadu who, during the same decade of 1970s, organised farmers in Tamil Nadu under the banner of Tamiliga Vyavasaigal Sangam. In fact, he was the one who later on advocated farmers to wear Green Towels as symbols of peasant identity. Nonetheless his organization during the decade of 1970s carried following agitations:

- Agitation against power tariff, 1970 and 1972
- Agitation against agricultural tax, land tax, cess, debt relief etc. 1974
- Agitation for remunerative prices, subsidies to agriculture, 1979
- Agitation for milk prices, 1980

The 1980s saw the beginning of what is called New Farmers' Movement in different parts of India. The reasons were:

- Terms of trade going against agriculture, declining purchasing power, un-remunerative prices, agriculture becoming a losing proposition, increase in input prices, declining per capita income from agriculture etc.
- It all began in Maharashtra under **Sharad Joshi**, a former employee of UN turned farmer, who began agitating in villages for remunerative prices for agricultural commodities. This one point agenda of remunerative prices began to be enacted by farmers in other states of India.
- In Uttar Pradesh, the movement started much late in 1986. It was spearheaded by Mahendra Singh Tikait was a peasant by profession. His organisation is called Bharatiya Kisan Union. His movement started from a small village called Sisoli and Shamli in Meerut District in Uttar Pradesh.

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