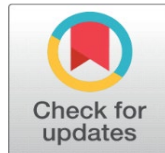
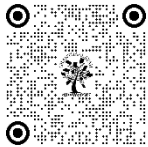


# A STUDY ON FARMER'S MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA STATE, INDIA

Raju Bajantri <sup>1</sup>, Dr. Mahalinga K <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Studies and Research in Political Science, Tumkur University, Tumkuru

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Studies and Research in Political Science, Tumkur University, Tumkuru



## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i4.2024.4398](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i4.2024.4398)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.

## ABSTRACT

India has a rather long history of the farmer movement that has shaped their social, economic and political condition to a large extent today. Its origin can be traced back to the colonial era when farmers from across the country mobilised in large numbers to protest the atrocities perpetrated against them. In Karnataka the period of late 1930's together with the Post-war period 1947-50 saw the most intense politically sponsored activity among middle and poor peasants has occurred in south India. These agitations known as tenant's agitation, such as Kagodu Satyagraha in Karnataka during 1950-51, Uttara-Kannada during 1950-70 etc., were carried over the issues such as forcible ejection, debts and rents it took the forms of forcible occupation of lands and sometimes culminated in violent agitations.

**Keywords:** Farmer's Movement, Indian Farmer's Movement, Karnataka State, A Study of Farmer



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Emerging in 1970s and gaining farther momentum in 1980s, the farmers' movement in India has exposed some newer contradictions of Indian agrarian society. Participated mostly by the middle and rich farmers of different Indian states, the farmers' movement represents a distinct phase in the history and tradition of agrarian unrest in India. Unlike the earlier mobilizations of the small and marginal peasants along with the landless agricultural laborers against the zaminders and landlords, the farmers' movement, concerned mostly with the demands of the upper stratum of the rural society, poses certain interesting questions about the relatively long tradition of mobilization of the peasantry. Questions arise whether the farmers' movement is an aftermath or more developed stage of the peasant movements in India or whether it can be considered as the denial or rejection of the fundamental dynamics characterizing the peasant mobilization against the landed gentry of the rural society.

Here a note on the difference between the two terms peasants and farmers seems necessary for conceptual clarity. This is more so to understand the range of debates concerning the difference or similarities between the peasant movement and the farmers' movement in India. Ghanshyam Shah argues that the term 'peasant' is ambiguous though it is used for those agriculturalists who are homogeneous, with small holdings operated by family labour and who produce mainly for his family purpose. There is however some scholars who would prefer to use the term broadly to refer to all classes of people engaged in agriculture. But going by recent trends in classifying different classes of agriculturalists, we

would use the term 'farmer' to refer to a person 'who owns or manages a farm' and produces for the market. In other words, the term farmer would be used to refer to propertied and well-established agrarian strata of the rural society.

Since the year 2000, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), a farmer movement working with peasant farmers, pastoralists and breeders, has organized seed festivals on an annual basis to facilitate farmer-to-farmer seed and knowledge exchange and seed sales, along with sessions for sharing information and experiences, e.g. on seed laws. The objective is to improve the exchange and sale of seeds from farmers to farmers and to protect the farmers' seeds systems as a way to implement Article 9 of the ITPGRFA. The organization further maintains seed banks, through which farmers can access seed of local varieties, as well as processing units for products made from peasant seeds, such as fabric made from local ('indigenous') cotton varieties. KRRS further provides information to farmers and the general public on Indian laws relating to Farmers' Rights, including seed legislation, plant variety protection, patents and regulations for genetically modified organisms (GMO).

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**ANANDA S (Jan 2021)** The farmers' movements in India have excelled in populist philosophizing. Some farmers' leaders, like Nanjundaswamy particularly, have emphasized that the price issue is only one of the many issues affecting farmers and the ultimate goal of their movement is to end capitalism of the Western type and run the economy on Gandhian principles. There is an immediate need to curb the mad rush to elitism that provides little employment and security to the masses. Mass leader like Prof. Nanjundaswamy has already given a call to his followers to avoid synthetic fabrics and wear only cottons. But there have been no corresponding moves to take up the issues concerning rural artisans and rural industries or to improve other aspects of rural life such as education and health. **Niloshree Bhattacharya (2017)** It is argued here that this is because of different conceptions and experiences of space for different actors. A complete reshuffling of partialities of human relations has taken place. Leaders have become distant, and yet solidarities develop with distant actors, while long-term allies seem not so close, but unlikely alliances with diverse actors emerge, and identities also attain different spatial dimensions. I have attempted to unravel the existent local-global disconnect, by demonstrating that perceptions of actors differ because of different experiences of space, which, in turn, are related to different material conditions. These differences primarily pertain to the practice of politics by actors in different spheres, the local, the national, and the transnational. While there is considerable overlap between the transnational and national spheres, the local sphere remains disconnected. **Vijay Kumar Hemappa Manegar (2018)** The problem of small farmers and Agricultural laborers is a serious issue in the rural India. To remove these problems the government should declare Agriculture as an industry argues the Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (KRRS). Then all laws of Industrial labour should be extended to the agricultural laborers. In addition to scientific prices for its produce it is also important scientific wage for the laborers should be implemented<sup>63</sup>. It is also important that the wasteland should be distributed to the landless and the state should assist them for cultivation; this reduces pressure on the existing agricultural land. **Partha Nath Mukherji (1998)** The agrarian transformation in Putijab has broadly undergone three phases. During the British colonial rule, the military-feudal-imperial nexus operated through the canal colonies, enabling the Britishers to extract large profits through colonial extraction. Contradictions within this feudal agrarian system led to peasant mobilizations over tenurial rights, largely under the Kisan Sabha of the Communist Party, culminating in the Land Ceiling Act in the post-independence period. Introduction of new farm technology and the consequent monetization of agricultural activities under the 'green revolution' signaled the second phase of agrarian transformation. Unequal terms of trade between rural and urban sectors became the major contradiction characterizing this phase, and farmers' movements arose seeking reprisal of this discrimination.

### 2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Followings are important objectives related to this research paper

- 1) To understand the farmer's movement in India.
- 2) To know the farmer's movement in Karnataka State.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This type of research is theoretical in nature. It examines the concepts, theories, phenomena of farmers' movement in Karnataka, India. Also it answers, what theories already exist? And to what extent it has been investigated? based on the gap between current theories and emerging new research problems. The secondary data has been collected from various databases, journals, books, websites, etc. It is an integration of reviews related to former movement in India.

### **4. FORMER'S MOVEMENT IN INDIA**

N. G Ranga was an India freedom fighter, a parliamentarian, and an exponent of the peasant philosophy. He was born on 7th November 1900, in the Guntur district of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Regarding as the father of the Indian Peasant movement, N.G Ranga played an important role in connecting peasants with the national freedom movement. Giving leadership to the agitated peasants, Ranga founded the Andhra Provincial Ryot's Association in 1928. In 1933, he led the historical ryot agitation. He continuously organized peasants of the region and found many organizations dedication to the peasants' cause. In 1936, he became the first General Secretary of all India Kisan Sabha. He was among the founding members of International Federation of Agriculture Producer, and the founder of Krishikar Lok Party. He dedicated his whole life fighting for the peasant's causes.

#### **4.1. FARMER MOVEMENTS IN INDIA BEFORE THE 1900S**

Farmer movements in the country before the 1900s were unorganised and staggered. One of the most significant movements in this period was the Indigo movement. Britishers forced farmers to grow indigo instead of food crops to maximise profits. This resulted in many problems for farmers. They were given meagre prices for indigo and it resulted in a fall in soil fertility. It also did not provide food security as farmers could eat food crops but could not eat indigo. The government in 1860 formed the Indigo commission that ruled that it was illegal to force cultivators to grow indigo. Farmers emerged victoriously.

Deccan Riots of 1875 were held to protest against the high money demand of Marwadi and Gujarati moneylenders. High duties were imposed on farmers and land revenue was increased by 50%. An Indian farmer's meagre income could not afford such heavy duties. Hence, a social boycott movement was organized in 1874 in which they decided to not purchase from their shops and not serve them in any capacity. The movement was prevalent in western India, but it could not be entirely successful. However, the government passed Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act in 1879.

#### **4.2. FARMER MOVEMENTS IN INDIA AFTER THE 1900S**

Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a major national leader in the early 20th century. He led the fight for Indian farmers' upliftment. Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 remains a historic movement led by him. Champaran Satyagraha: In Bihar's Champaran, farmers were horribly exploited. They were not compensated fairly for their work. They were forced to grow indigo on at least 3/20th of their farmland, for which they received minimal income. In 1917, Mahatma Gandhi reached there after returning from South Africa and refused to leave the village until farmers' demands were met. Champaran Agrarian Act was passed in May 1918, as per which farmers were freed from paying high taxes. The movement turned violent at the end, which was against Gandhiji's principle of non-violence. Nevertheless, it is considered an important farmer movement in the freedom struggle.

In Gujarat's Kheda, farmers' harvest failed due to drought-like conditions. However, even then they were forced to pay taxes. Leaders like Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel came together to fight for farmers' cause. The prime demands raised by farmers were fulfilled by the government. Even after a crop failure, the British government refused to omit tax collections and even hiked the land revenue by 30%. Agitated farmers came together and all attempts by the British forces to suppress the movement failed. In the end, the tax payment was omitted for that year and the hike in Inland Revenue was lowered down to 6% only.

### 4.3. FARMERS' MOVEMENT AS NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Now the question is can the farmers' movement in India also be classified as an example of new social movement? The answer of the question is indeed complex. As a matter of fact, the act of typifying social movements is very difficult since by nature social movements are of the kaleidoscopic variety. As an expression of the internal dynamics of any given society, social movements are ever changing since no society is stable along the dimension of time. Often a single social movement through the course of its gradual unfolding can acquire infinite range of variable properties which makes the task of classification problematic, if not impossible. This is equally true of the farmers' movement in India. Perhaps, due to this there has been range of opinions regarding the newness of the farmers' movement. Let us reviews some of these arguments. Researcher found four senses in which the farmers' movement in India can be thought of as a new social movement. In his words these are 'agency had passed from 'peasants' to 'farmers'; the central focus of rural agitation had shifted from land to prices; the essential imitational form was a non-party one; and distinctive, novel methods of agitation were employed. During the 1980s there was a fifth, limited, sense in which these movements might be seen as 'new': with a broadening of agenda and ideology to include the environment and women's issues part of worldwide 'new social movements' which embrace a new set of post material values.' Considering the farmers' movement as a response to the interaction of the Indian state with western capitalism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and later globalization during the last two decades of the twentieth century, also finds several grounds for which the farmers' movement can be thought of a new social movement. In his words, the reasons for this are first, unlike the earlier struggles, which were about land, market and prices became the most important issues. Second, the struggle was directed against external agencies such as the state, and industrial capital/international capital. Third, unlike the earlier farmers' movements, the 'new' movements bring together entire rural populations, past and present, irrespective of the economic, ethnic, caste, religious, and political differences. Fourth, they believed in discoursing on a large number of issues. Thereby, they placed emphasis on creating a rational farmer within the larger framework. Finally, they believed in retrieving the communitarian life in the context of capitalism, both western and indigenous, threatening the identities, communitarian life and cultural practices.

### 4.4. MAJOR DEMANDS OF THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT IN INDIA

In spite of having subtle differences in ideological and strategic aspects, these organizations have stressed on the following demands of farmers in their respective territories

- 1) Lower prices on inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides.
- 2) Lower tariffs on electricity and water.
- 3) Abolition of land revenue and imposition of tax based on output alone.
- 4) Waiving of loans owed by farmers to the government, banks and cooperative societies, which are the offshoots of the unjustified levy system and low prices imposed by the government.
- 5) Reduction of rate of interest on fresh loans.
- 6) Removal of tax along with other restrictions on the use of agricultural implements like tractors and tractor-trailers.
- 7) Fixation of agricultural prices realistically keeping into consideration the input prices and man-hours spent for production.
- 8) Higher output prices with respect to products of grains, cash-crops, vegetables, milk and so on.
- 9) Introduction of crop insurance.
- 10) The removal of discrepancy in the terms of trade between industry and agriculture which has been largely in favor of the former at the cost of the latter.

## 5. FORMER'S MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA

In Karnataka Mahantha Devaru Nanjundaswamy (13 February 1936 – 3 February 2004) was a Gandhian leader, scholar and India's leading activist, who advocated for the farmers' rights. He is one of the founders of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) in 1980. He was a prominent anti-globalization campaign leader. The KRRS opposed the forceful recovery of loans and subsequent attaching of property, the imposition of levy price for sugarcane and demanded free electricity, subsidy for fertilisers, higher support price and so on. These demands were aimed at consolidating the gains of the green revolution.

Prof Nanjundaswamy, a lawyer and staunch Lohiaite, not only led the fight against adverse implications of the government's neo-liberal policies but also infused self-respect and pride among the farmers of Karnataka. The KRRS also staged a relentless struggle against the introduction of GM crops and biotechnology, it opposed the patenting of seeds and fought against multinational companies such as Cargill and Monsanto that promoted such technologies in India. To conceptualise its anti-globalisation stance, the KRRS took a strong position — Western capitalism was not only trying to capture the markets of the Third World but was also trying to appropriate the natural resources and biological diversity of countries like India. In this context, the KRRS raised the slogan of food sovereignty, attempted to conserve traditional crop varieties and initiated discussions on sustainable development though this did not take off comprehensively.

### 5.1. ELECTORAL POLITICS

In the meantime, Prof MDN also made futile attempts to pursue his struggle through electoral politics by founding a political party called Kannada Desha and contested the elections but without much success. One of the reasons for its failed attempt was that it had to compete with established political parties, which shared a common social base.

The movement eventually fizzled out in the late nineties and it didn't take much time after the death of MDN for the KRRS to split into several factions. The disintegration had started much before, when MDN emerged as a spokesperson of the Third World farmers. This led to the organisation spreading itself thin and focusing on too many issues, instead of the ones that required their direct attention.

The green shawl sported by Karnataka's farmers is all that remains of this once vibrant political movement. While Raitha Sangha looked at the larger issues of sustainable agriculture, the Organic Farming Movement led by progressive farmers like Narayana Reddy, D D Bharamagoudra and Purushotham Rao was evolving in the state as well. Karnataka also became one of the first states in the country to have an organic farming policy in 2004.

Most of the struggles that the peasants resorted to were either carried as part of nationalist struggle or independent of it. Some of the important struggles of farmers or peasants during the British period were : Bhil Revolt ( 1822,1823,1837- 60), Deccan Peasant Revolt (1875), Mopilla Revolt (1921), The Muslhi Satyagraha (1921-24), Struggle of Warlis (1945), Birsa Munda revolt Nagar Peasant Uprising(1830-33). In this context, three important struggles that Gandhi led require our special attention. They were: Champaran (1918-19); Bardoli (1925) and Kheda(1918). In the first struggle, the primary issue was opposing the Tinkathia System imposed on the Indigo cultivators of Champaran by the colonial powers. In the second and third struggle, opposing the rent payable to the government at the time of distress was the major issue. All these struggles had one impact: it brought the peasants to the nationalist movement. In Karnataka the period of late 1930's together with the Post-war period 1947-50 saw the most intense politically sponsored activity among middle and poor peasants has occurred in south India. These agitations known as tenant's agitation, such as Kagodu18 Satyagraha in Karnataka during19 1950-51, Uttara - Kannada during 1950-70 etc., were carried over the issues such as forcible ejection, debts and rents it took the forms of forcible occupation of lands and sometimes culminated in violent agitations.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This article study the farmers' movement in Karnataka, India, by focusing on the nature of organisation and participation. It marked the assertion of peasant identity in the social and political spheres by developing informed political agency among the formars. One can draw parallels with the way Freire wanted the oppressed to inculcate social and political experience through experience, by participating in associations, unions, etc. It was considered to be a prerequisite for political and socio-economic democracy. His conception of development of individual and collective

identity, democratic participation and cooperation resonated during the farmers' movement that had wider participative democratic implications in times marked by heightened populist rhetoric, communalism, identity politics and widening inequality.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

## REFERENCES

- ANANDA S (Jan 2021) "A historical analysis of Farmers Movements in Karnataka", International Journal of Research Culture Society, ISSN: 2456-6683, Volume - 5, Issue - 1
- Niloshree Bhattacharya (2017) "Networks, Solidarities and Emerging Alternatives: Farmers' Movement in Karnataka", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 52, No. 25/26, pp. 48-55
- Vijay Kumar Hemappa Manegar (2018) "Farmers Movements in Karnataka", Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR), (ISSN-2349-5162), Volume 5, Issue 7
- Partha Nath Mukherji (1998) "The Farmers' Movement in Punjab: Politics of Pressure Groups and Pressure of Party Politics", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 33, No. 18, pp. 1043-1048
- <https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/soc14/chapter/farmers-movement-in-india/>
- <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/farmers-rights/inventory-on-frs/news-detail/en/c/810191/>
- <https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-36/pedagogy-resistance-and-reflective-action-examining-farmers%E2%80%99-movement-india-2020-21>
- <https://indianculture.gov.in/node/2822394#:~:text=Regarded%20as%20the%20father%20of,with%20the%20national%20freedom%20movement.>
- [https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/soc14/chapter/farmers-movement-in-india/#:~:text=Since%20its%20emergence%20in%20the,\(BKU\)%2C%20led%20by%20M.S.](https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/soc14/chapter/farmers-movement-in-india/#:~:text=Since%20its%20emergence%20in%20the,(BKU)%2C%20led%20by%20M.S.)
- <https://unacademy.com/content/upsc/study-material/sociology/peasants-and-farmers-movements/#:~:text=Farmer's%20movement%20in%20India%20after,imposed%20by%20the%20British%20government.>
- <https://www.deccanherald.com/features/karnatakas-defining-moments-a-fierce-farmers-agitation-that-spread-itself-too-thin-922248.html>