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# FACT FILE

## HISTORY

02



**PEASANTS,  
TRIBAL & CASTE  
MOVEMENTS**

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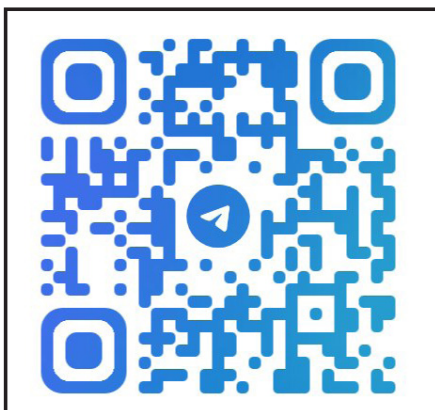
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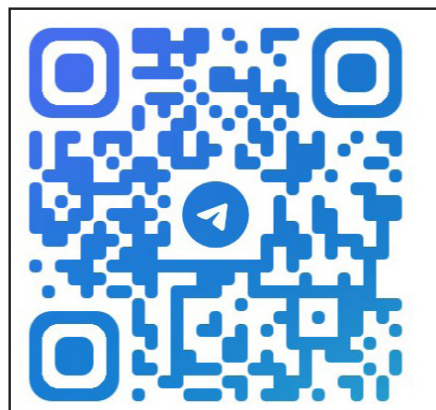
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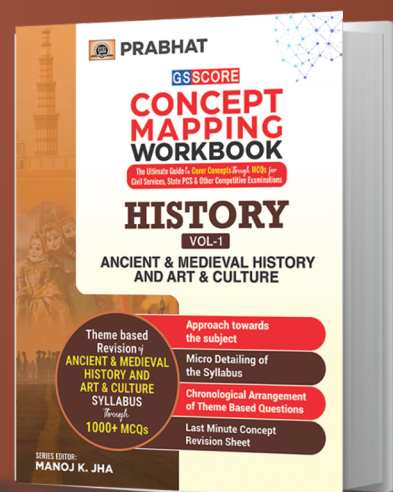
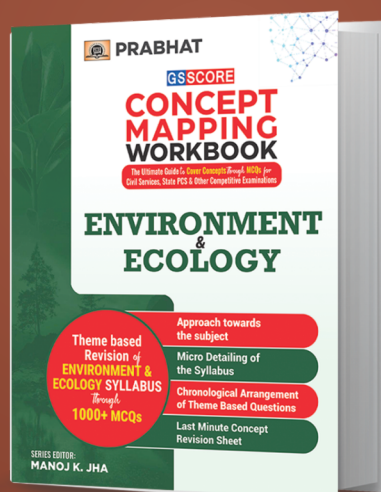
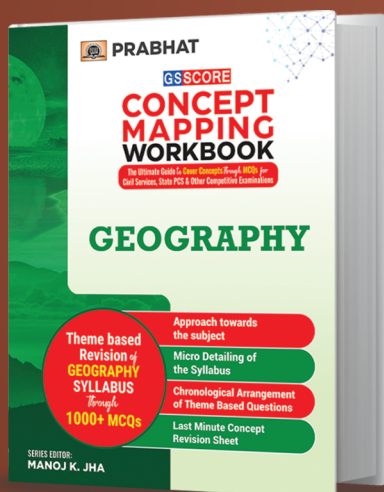
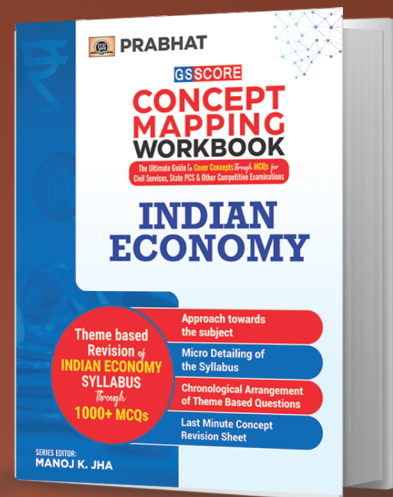
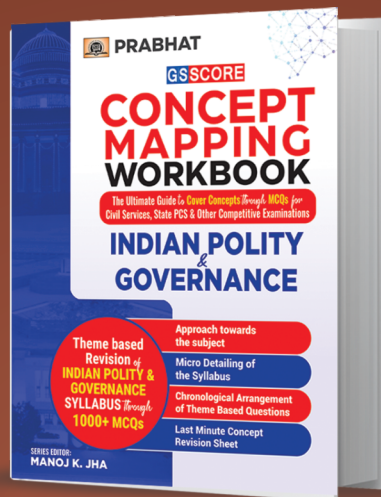
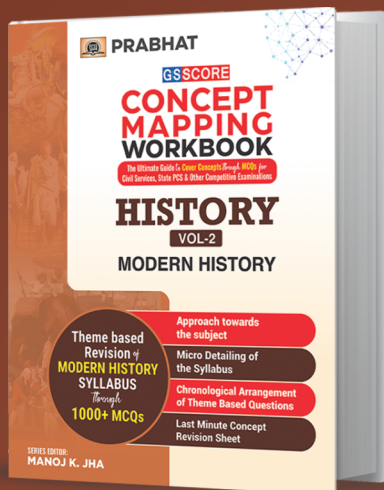
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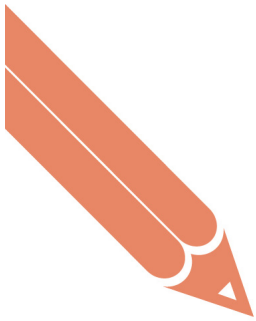
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# PEASANTS, TRIBAL AND CASTE MOVEMENTS

## \* PEASANT MOVEMENTS WITH RELIGIOUS OVERTONES

### Narkelberia Uprising (1782-1831)

- **Mir Nithar Ali or Titu Mir** inspired the Muslim tenants in West Bengal to **rise against landlords, mainly Hindu**, who imposed a beard-tax on the Faraizis, and British indigo planters.
- Often considered the **first armed peasant uprising against the British**, this revolt soon took on a religious hue.
- The **revolt later merged into the Wahabi movement**.

### The Pagal Panthis (1825-1850)

- **Founded by Karam Shah**, it was a **semi-religious group** mainly constituting the **Hajong and Garo tribes of Mymensingh district** (earlier in Bengal).
- The **tribal peasants organised themselves under Karam Shah's son, Tipu**, to fight the oppression of the zamindars.
- The **government introduced an equitable arrangement to protect these peasants**, but the movement was violently suppressed.

### Faraizi Revolt (1838–1857)

- The Faraizis were the **followers of a Muslim sect founded by Haji Shariat-Allah of Faridpur** in Eastern Bengal.
- They **advocated radical religious, social and political changes**.
- **Shariat-Allah son of Dadu Mian** (1819-60) organised his followers with an aim to expel the English intruders from Bengal.
- Most of the **Faraizis joined the Wahabi ranks**.

### Moplah Uprisings (1921)

- **Who were Mappilas?** The **Mappilas were the Muslim tenants** inhabiting the **Malabar region** where most of the **landlords were Hindus**. Their grievances centred on **lack of security of tenure, high rents, renewal fees and other oppressive exactions**.
- It had been an uprising of Muslim tenants against British rulers and local Hindu landlords.
- **Merger:** The Mappila movement **merged with the ongoing Khilafat agitation**.

- The leaders of the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement like **Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad addressed Mappila meetings.**
- What began as an anti-government and anti-landlord affair acquired **communal overtones.**
- The communalisation of the rebellion **completed the isolation of the Mappilas from the Khilafat-Non Cooperation Movement.**

## \* EARLY PEASANT MOVEMENTS

### Indigo Revolt (1859-60)

- **Background:** From the late 18th century, Bengal became the major centre for indigo production, accounting for 67% of London's total imports of the dye in 1796.
- **Immediate reason:** In Bengal, the indigo planters exploited **the local peasants by forcing them to grow indigo on their lands** instead of the more paying crops like rice.
  - The anger of the peasants exploded in 1859 when, **led by Digambar Biswas and Bishnu Biswas of Nadia district**, they decided not to grow indigo under duress and resisted the physical pressure of the planters.
- **Outcome:** The **Government appointed an indigo commission** to inquire into the problem of indigo cultivation.
  - Based on its recommendations, the Government issued a notification in November 1860 **that the ryots could not be compelled to grow indigo** and that it would ensure that all disputes were settled by legal means.

### Pabna Agrarian Leagues

**Origin:** It was a resistance movement against the oppression of the **Zamindars**. It originated in the **Yusufshahi pargana**, which is now the **Sirajganj district** within greater Pabna.

- **The peasants of Yusuf Shahi Pargana in Patna district** formed an agrarian league or combination to resist the demands of the zamindars.
- **The league organised a rent strike**—the ryots refused to pay the enhanced rents, challenging the zamindars in the courts.
- The main form of struggle was that of legal resistance; **there was very little violence.**
- A number of **young Indian intellectuals** including Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, R.C. Dutt and the Indian Association under Surendranath Banerjea **supported the peasants' cause.**
- **Outcome:** Many peasants were **able to acquire occupancy rights and resist enhanced rents.**
  - The government also **promised to undertake legislation to protect the tenants** from the worst aspects of zamindari oppression. In 1885, the **Bengal Tenancy Act was passed.**

### Deccan Riots (1875)

- **Origin:** The Deccan Riots took place in 1875, began in Pune, Maharashtra.
- **Contributing factors:** Exaggerated revenue demands **under the Ryotwari system** and maladministration.
  - The **conditions had worsened due to a crash in cotton prices** after the end of the American Civil War in 1864, the **Government's decision to raise the land revenue** by 50% in 1867, and a **succession of bad harvests.**
  - In 1874, the growing tension between the moneylenders and the peasants resulted in a **social boycott movement organised by the ryots against the "outsider" moneylenders** (Marwaris or Gujaratis).

- **Outcome:** The **Government succeeded in repressing the movement**. As a conciliatory measure, the **Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act was passed in 1879**.

## The Kisan Sabha Movement

- **Leader:** It was pioneered under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.
- **Objective:** to mobilise peasant grievances against the zamindari attacks on their occupancy rights. The majority of the cultivators were subjected to **high rents, summary evictions (bedakhali), illegal levies, renewal fees or nazrana**.
  - Tenants in many places withheld the payment of rent, however many also faced eviction due to their inability to pay arrears.
- **Outcome:** Even though it made an impact, the Kisan Sabha Movement could not break the oppressive feudal character of Bihar's agrarian set-up. Nonetheless, Gaya was one of the districts where the Kisan Sabha Movement did succeed in bringing some relief to peasant grievances.

## Eka Movement

- Towards the end of 1921, peasant discontent resurfaced in some northern districts of the United Provinces—**Hardoi, Bahraich, Sitapur**.
- The **issues involved were:**
  - High rents—50 per cent higher than the recorded rates;
  - Oppression of thikadars in charge of revenue collection; and
  - Practice of share-rents.
- The assembled peasants vowed that they would:
  - Pay only the recorded rent but would pay it on time;
  - Not leave when evicted;
  - Refuse to do forced labour;
  - Give no help to criminals;
  - Abide by panchayat decisions.
- The grassroot leadership of the Eka Movement came from **Madari Pasi and other low-caste leaders**, and many small zamindars.
- By March 1922, severe **repression by authorities brought the movement to an end**.

## Bardoli Satyagraha (1928)

- **Background:** Bardoli was a peasant village in Gujarat's Surat region. The British authorities hiked land taxes by 30 per cent here which came as a rude shock to the villagers already reeling under various miseries.
- **Bardoli Inquiry Committee** was set up to go into the issue. The **committee found the revenue hike to be unjustified**.
- In February 1926, **Vallabhbhai Patel was called to lead** the movement. The **women of Bardoli gave him the title of "Sardar"**.
- To organise the movement, **Patel set up 13 chhavanis or workers' camps in the taluka. Bardoli Satyagraha Patrika was brought out** to mobilise public opinion.
- **K.M. Munshi and Lalji Naranji resigned from the Bombay Legislative Council** in support of the movement.

- The Government set the condition that **first the enhanced rent be paid by all the occupants** (not actually done).
- Then, a committee went into the whole affair and found the revenue hike to be unjustified and **recommended a rise of 6.03 per cent only**.

### Tebhaga Movement (1946-47)

- **Background:** It was a movement of the **sharecroppers of Bengal** demanding two-thirds instead of half as their produce. Basically from this principle demand the name 'Tebhaga' movement comes.
- The storm centre of the movement was north Bengal, **principally among Rajbanshis**—a low caste of tribal origin. **Muslims also participated** in large numbers.
- The movement dissipated soon, because of the League ministry's sop of the **Bargardari Bill, the popularisation of the Hindu Mahasabha's agitation for a separate Bengal and renewed riots in Calcutta** which ended the prospects of sympathetic support from the urban sections.

### Telangana Movement

- This was the **biggest peasant guerrilla war of modern Indian history**.
- The princely state of **Hyderabad under Asajahi Nizams** was marked by a combination of **religious-linguistic domination, total lack of political and civil liberties, grossest forms of forced exploitation by deshmukhs, jagirdars, doras (landlords) in forms of forced labour (vethi) and illegal exactions**.
- The **uprising began in July 1946** when a deshmukh's thug murdered a village militant in Jangaon taluq of Nalgonda.
- The **peasants organised themselves into village sanghams**, and attacked using lathis, stone slings and chilli powder.
- The movement was at its **greatest intensity between August 1947 and September 1948**.
- The peasants **brought about a rout of the Razaqars**—the Nizam's stormtroopers.
- **Once the Indian security forces took over Hyderabad**, the movement fizzled out.
- The **Telangana movement had many positive achievements** to its credit.
  - In the villages controlled by guerrillas, vethi and forced labour disappeared.
  - Agricultural wages were raised.
  - Illegally seized lands were restored.
  - Steps were taken to fix ceilings and redistribute lands.
  - Measures were taken to improve irrigation and fight cholera.
  - An improvement in the condition of women was witnessed.
  - The autocratic-feudal regime of India's biggest princely state was shaken up, clearing the way for the formation of Andhra Pradesh on linguistic lines.

### Naxalite Movement in West Bengal

- The peasant uprising occurred in the **Naxalbari thana in the Darjeeling** district of northern part of **West Bengal in May 1967**.
- It was organised against large scale eviction of sharecroppers by jotedars.
- After independence, the Govt. of West Bengal enacted the **West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act (1953)** to abolish zamindari and other intermediary systems.
- Due to ineffective implementation of the provisions, eviction of the tenants and the sharecroppers continued.



- This resulted in sharp downward mobility of the peasants along with economic insecurity and unemployment.
- The two most prominent leaders of this movement were **Kanu Sanyal and Charu Mazumdar**.
- The movement spread to other areas of the state and elsewhere in **Bihar and Andhra Pradesh** later in the form of the Naxalite movement.

## \* TRIBAL REVOLTS OF MAINLAND

### Pahariyas' Rebellion (1778)

- **Reason:** The **British expansion on their territory** led to an uprising **by the martial Pahariyas of the RajMahal Hills** in 1778.
- **Outcome:** The British were forced to usher in peace by **declaring their territory as damni-kol area**.

### Chuar Uprising (1776)

- The Chuar Rebellion took place in the south-west region of West Bengal's Bankura district.
- **Reason: Famine**, enhanced land revenue demands and economic distress goaded the Chuar aboriginal tribesmen of the **Jungle Mahal of Midnapore district and also of the Bankura district** (in Bengal) to take up arms.
  - The local Zamindars of the Jungle Mahals had maintained their land rights since the time of the Mughals, and their position was respected by the Nawabs of Bengal. However, this changed when the East India Company took over the administration of the region.
- **Led by:** Chuars (local tribesmen) and Paiks (hereditary policemen).
- The uprising lasted for several decades, and was at its zenith in 1799.

### Kol Mutiny (1831)

- The Kols, along with other tribes, are **inhabitants of Chotanagpur**. This covered **Ranchi, Singhbhum, Hazaribagh, Palamau and the western parts of Manbhum**.
- The trouble in 1831 started with **large-scale transfers of land from Kol headmen to outsiders** like Hindu, Sikh and Muslim farmers and money-lenders who were **oppressive and demanded heavy taxes**.
- The Kols resented this and in 1831, **under the leadership of Buddho Bhagat**, the Kol rebels killed or burnt about a thousand outsiders.
- Only after **large-scale military operations order was restored**.

### Ho and Munda Uprisings (1820-1837)

- The **Raja of Parahat organised his Ho tribals to revolt against the occupation of Singhbhum** (now in Jharkhand). The **revolt continued till 1827** when the Ho tribals were forced to submit.
- However, later in 1831, **they again organised a rebellion, joined by the Mundas of Chotanagpur**, to protest against the newly introduced farming revenue policy and the entry of Bengalis into their region.
- In 1899-1900, the **Mundas** in the region south of Ranchi rose **under Birsa Munda**.
- **The Ulgulan was one of the most significant tribal uprisings** in the period 1860-1920.
- The rebellion which **began as a religious movement gathered political force** to fight against introduction of feudal, zamindari tenures, and exploitation by money-lenders and forest contractors.
- The **Mundas claimed Chhotanagpur as their area** in 1879.

## The Santhal Rebellion (1855-56)

- **Continued oppression of the Santhals, an agricultural people**, who had fled to settle in the plains of the Rajmahal hills (Bihar) **led to the Santhal rebellion against the zamindars**.
- The **money-lenders** who had the support of the police among others **had joined the zamindars to subject the peasants to oppressive exactions** and dispossession of lands.
- **Under Sidhu and Kanhu**, two brothers, **the Santhals proclaimed an end to Company rule**, and declared the **area between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal as autonomous**.

## Khond Uprisings (1837-1856)

- From 1837 to 1856, the Khonds of the hilly tracts extending from **Odisha to the Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh** revolted against Company rule.
- **Chakra Bisnoi, a young raja**, led the Khonds who were joined by the Ghumsar, Kalahandi and other tribals **to oppose the suppression of human sacrifice, new taxes, and the entry of zamindars** into their areas.
- A **later Khond rebellion in 1914 in the Orissa region** hoped that foreign rule would end and they could gain an autonomous government.

## Koya Revolts

- The **Koyas of the eastern Godavari track** (modern Andhra), joined by **Khonda Sara chiefs**, and rebelled in 1803, 1840, 1845, 1858, 1861 and 1862.
- They **rose once again in 1879-80 under Tomma Sora**.
- Their complaints were **oppression by police and moneylenders, new regulations and denial of their customary rights** over forest areas.
- After the death of Tomma Sora, **another rebellion was organised in 1886 by Raja Anantayyar**.

## Bhil Revolts

- The Bhils who **lived in the Western Ghats controlled the mountain passes between the north and the Deccan**.
- They **revolted against Company rule** in 1817-19, as they had to face famine, economic distress and misgovernment.
- The **Bhils revolted again** in 1825, 1831 and in 1846.
- Later, a reformer, **Govind Guru helped the Bhils of south Rajasthan** (Banswara, Sunth states) to organise themselves **to fight for a Bhil Raj by 1913**.

## Ramosi Risings

- The Ramosis, the **hill tribes of the Western Ghats**, had not reconciled to British rule and the British pattern of administration.
- After the annexation of the Maratha territories by the British, **the Ramosis, who had been employed by the Maratha administration, lost their means of livelihood**.
- They **rose under Chittur Singh in 1822** and plundered the country around Satara.
- Again, **there were eruptions in 1825-26 under Umaji Naik of Poona** and his supporter **Bapu Trimbakji Sawant**, and the disturbances continued till 1829.
- Generally the **British followed a pacifist policy towards the Ramosis**, and even **recruited some of them into the hill police**.

## Tamar Revolts

- Revolt was led by Bhola Nath Sahay.
- Tribal communities from Tamar revolted from 1789 to 1832 against British oppression.
- They were joined by other tribes from Midnapur, Koelpur, Dhadha, Chatshila, Jalda and Silli.
- They jointly revolted against the blemished align system of the British government.
- The blemished align system indicates the failure of the British government to secure the land rights of the tenants (cultivators) as a result of which they were evicted from their land.
- However the Tamar revolt was repressed by the British in 1832-1833.

## The Kherwar Movement

- Bhagirath Majhi initiated this movement in 1833.
- The Kherwar movement was the tribals' desire to retain their independent territory.
- Assuming the title of Babaji, Bhagirath Majhi promised the tribals of setting them free from the tyranny of oppressors if they worship Ram – the Hindu God.

## Bokta Movement

- Bokta movement erupted in various parts of Chotanagpur.
- The three phases of the movement were - as the agrarian, revivalist and political phases.
- The agrarian phase and the revivalist phase saw protests against the landlords.

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- Tribal tenants rebelled against the hike in land rent as well as their harassment by the landlords.
- On the political front, the tribals desired to form a separate territory having political autonomy.

### Midnapur Movement (1918-1924)

- It started way back in 1760 against the British.
- The Midnapur peasant movement gained momentum during the late 19th century following the encroachment of tribal land.
- It had two phases (i) overlapped with the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22; (ii) started following the arrest of Gandhi.
- Tribals were excluded from the non-cooperation movement up till 1920.
- During the beginning of 1921, efforts were made to include tribals also in this movement.
- In 1922, tribals asserted their right over the forest and the movement broke the barriers of Midnapur Zamindari Company and included Indian landlords also.

## \* TRIBAL MOVEMENTS OF THE NORTH-EAST

### Khasi Uprising (1830-1833)

- After **having occupied the hilly region between Garo and Jaintia Hills**, the East India Company wanted to build a **road linking the Brahmaputra Valley with Sylhet**.
- A **large number of outsiders** including Englishmen, Bengalis and the labourers from the plains **were brought to these regions**.
- The Khasis, Garos, Khamptis and the Singphos organised themselves under **U Tirot Sing Syiem** to drive away the strangers from the plains.
- The Khasis were defeated in this battle, and the British acquired control of the highlands.

### Singphos Rebellion (1843)

- An uprising of the Singphos took place in 1843 against the Britishers in Tirap, Arunachal Pradesh. It was an act of retaliation to reclaim the Singpho lands that were encroached on by the East India Company.
- **Chief Nirang Phidu led an uprising in 1843**, which involved an attack on the British garrison and the death of many soldiers.
- **Some of the smaller movements were** those of the **Mishmis** (in 1836); the **Khampti rebellion in Assam** between 1839 and 1842; **the Lushais' revolt** in 1842 and 1844, when they attacked villages in Manipur.

## \* THE MOVEMENT OF THE WORKING CLASS

The Indian working class **suffered from the same kind of exploitation witnessed during the industrialisation of Europe** and the rest of the West, such as low wages, long working hours, unhygienic and hazardous working conditions, employment of child labour and the absence of basic amenities.


### Early Efforts


- The early nationalists, especially the Moderates,
  - **were indifferent to the labour's cause**

- **differentiated between the labour** in the Indian-owned factories and those in the British-owned factories
  - **believed that labour legislations would affect the competitive edge** enjoyed by the Indian-owned industries
  - **did not want a division in the movement** on the basis of classes
  - **did not support the Factory Acts** of 1881 and 1891 for these reasons
- **1870:** Sasipada Banerjea started a workingmen's club and newspaper Bharat Shramjeevi.
  - **1878:** Sorabjee Shapoorji Bengalee tried to get a bill, providing better working conditions to labour, passed in the Bombay Legislative Council.
  - **1880:** Narain Meghajee Lokhanday started the newspaper Deenbandhu and set up the Bombay Mill and Millhands Association.
  - **1899** The first strike by the Great Indian Peninsular Railways took place, and it got widespread support.


### All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)

- AITUC was founded on October 31, 1920.
- The Indian National Congress president for the year, **Lala Lajpat Rai, was elected as the first president** of AITUC and **Dewan Chaman Lal as the first general secretary**.
- **Lajpat Rai was the first to link capitalism with imperialism**— "imperialism and militarism are the twin children of capitalism".
- **The Gaya session of the Congress (1922) welcomed the formation** of the AITUC and a committee was formed to assist it.







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## Trade Union Act, 1926

- **Recognised trade unions** as legal associations
- **Laid down conditions for registration and regulation** of trade union activities
- **Secured immunity, both civil and criminal**, for trade unions from prosecution for legitimate activities, but put some restrictions on their political activities.

## Trade Disputes Act, 1929

- Made **compulsory the appointment of Courts of Inquiry and Consultation Boards** for settling industrial disputes;
- **Made illegal the strikes in public utility services** like posts, railways, water and electricity, **unless each individual worker planning to go on strike gave an advance notice of one month** to the administration;
- Forbade trade union activity of coercive or purely political nature and even sympathetic strikes.

## Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929)

- In March 1929, the Government arrested 31 labour leaders, and the three-and-a-half-year trial **resulted in the conviction of Muzaffar Ahmed, S.A. Dange, Joglekar, Philip Spratt, Ben Bradley, Shaukat Usmani and others**.
- After 1931 there was a **dip in the working class movement because of a split in 1931** in which the corporatist trend **led by N.M. Joshi broke away from the AITUC to set up the All India Trade Union Federation**. In 1935, the communists re-joined the AITUC.

## \* CASTE MOVEMENTS/BACKWARD-CLASS MOVEMENTS

### Satya Shodhak Samaj

- In Western India, **Jyotirao Govindrao Phule** struggled for the upliftment of lower castes through his Satya Shodhak Samaj.
- He **strongly criticised the Brahmanical domination** in the name of religion. He was **also a critic of the Indian National Congress** for neglecting the weaker sections.
- The aim of his organisation was to **achieve social justice for weaker sections of the society**. He opened a number of **schools, orphanages for the children and women belonging to all castes**. He was elected as a **member of the Poona Municipal committee in 1876**.
- In 1888, he was **honoured with the title of Mahatma**. His writings include **Dharma Tritiya Ratna, Ishara, Life of Shivaji**, etc.

### Shri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam Movement

- The **non-Brahmin movement** found reflection in Kerala under the **leadership of Shri Narayana Guru** who belonged to the **backward Ezhava caste**.
- He established the **SNDP Yogam with its branches outside Kerala State** also.
- He launched a **two-point program for the upliftment of the Ezhavas** to root out the practice of untouchability.
- As a second step Narayana Guru built a number of temples, **which were declared open to all castes**.
- He **criticised Gandhi for his faith in Chaturvarna**, which he considered the parent of the caste system and untouchability. He gave a new slogan **"one religion, one caste and one God for mankind"**.

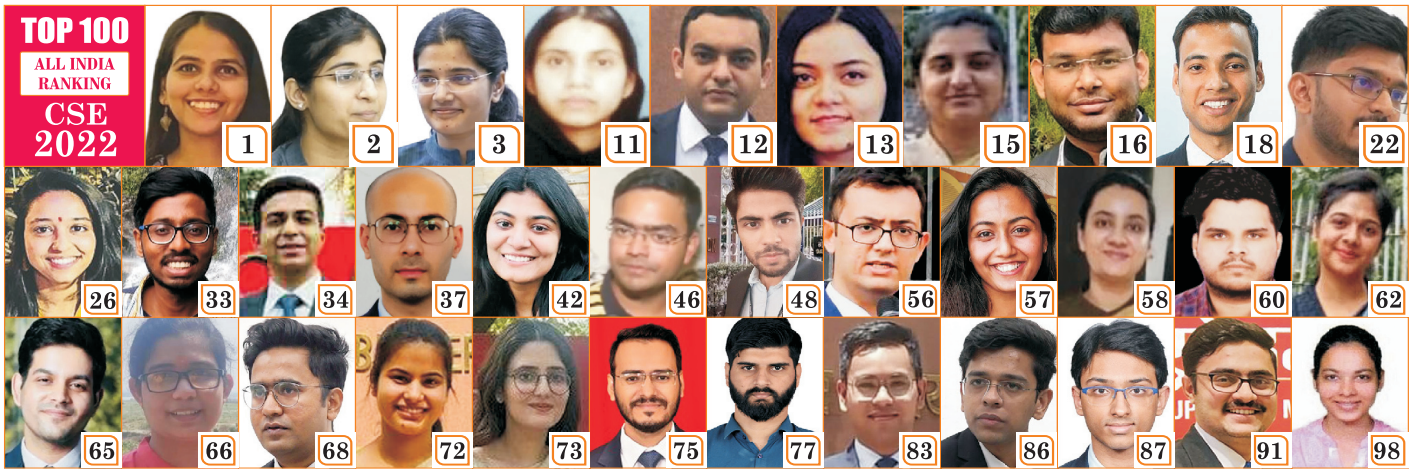
## Justice Party

- Mindful of the **importance of literacy as the base of the Brahmins' virtual monopoly** of government offices, the **non-Brahmin elite sought to advance their communities through education**.
- **Dr T.M. Nair, P. Thyagaraja Chetty, and C.N. Mudaliar** came together and founded the Justice Party in 1916.
- It was **resolved to form an association of non-Brahman Hindus** under the name of **South Indian Peoples' Association**.
- Chetty **asked all non-Brahmins to unite** and draw the attention of the government to the grievances voiced in the Manifesto.
- With the proclamation of the non-Brahmin Manifesto, **it was argued that an association for the political advancement of the non-Brahmin community should also be formed** to function alongside the South Indian Peoples' Association.
- In August 1917, the **South Indian Liberal Federation came into existence**.
- It was announced that the Justice Party's objective was **justice for all Dravidians through the establishment of a separate state** under the watchful guidance of British rule.
- The **Justice Party set itself up against all "negative" methods of passive resistance and noncooperation**, which Nair saw as subversive to any ordered and stable government.

## Self-respect Movement

- **It was founded by Ramaswamy Naicker in 1925**. It was designed to improve the **living conditions of the Dravidian people**, to **expose the Brahmin tyranny**, and the deceptive methods by which they controlled all spheres of Hindu life.
- **He organised the "Dravida Nadu Conference"** for the advocacy of a separate and independent "Dravida Nation".
- The demand was reiterated the following year **in response to the Lahore Resolution passed by the Muslim League** demanding the creation of Pakistan.
- **Naicker supported the creation of Pakistan** and tried to enlist the support of the Muslim League for the creation of the "Dravida Nation".
- In 1944, **Naicker founded the Dravida Kazhagam** and asked the members to **wear black shirts whenever possible to symbolise the present day downtrodden condition** of the Dravidians.
- The main objective of the Dravida Kazhagam was proclaimed to be the **achievement of a sovereign, independent Dravidian Republic federal** in nature with four units **representing the linguistic division**, each division having residuary power and the autonomy in the matter of internal administration.
- **No member was allowed to wear any religious marks** on the forehead. He called upon the **non-Brahmin community to boycott Brahmins at ceremonies**.
- The idols of the Hindu deities such as Rama, Ganesha, Krishna, etc. were **deliberately destroyed and the Ramayana and other Sanskrit epics were distorted** to the political ends of the Dravida Kazhagam.
- The **movement suffered a split with Annadurai forming the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam** with active support from Karunanidhi, Natarajan, and Sampath.





**SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!**

