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Peasant Movements, the Working-Class Movements and Struggles for Gurudwara Reform and Temple Entry

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Chapter 16: Peasant Movements

Three important peasant movements of the early twentieth century:

1. Kisan Sabha and Eka movements in Avadh in UP
 2. Mappila rebellion in Malabar
 3. Bardoli Satyagraha in Gujarat
- The UP Kisan Sabha was set up in February 1918 through the efforts of Gauri Shankar Mishra and Indra Narain Dwivedi with the support of Madan Mohan Malviya.
 - By June 1919, it had established about 450 branches in 173 tehsils of the province.
 - In August 1921, Mappila (Muslim) tenants rebelled. Their grievances related to lack of any security of tenure, renewal fees, high rents and other oppressive landlord exactions.
 - The no-tax movement was launched in Bardoli taluqa of Surat district in Gujarat in 1928.

Chapter 17: The Working-Class Movements

- There were some working-class movements in second half of 19th century. However, they were impulsive and not very well organized.
- The early nationalists had a lukewarm attitude towards the question of workers. This was because initially Congress wanted to focus on issues which were of common concern to all the people of India.
- There was a difference in attitude of the nationalists towards workers in indigenous and European enterprises.
- The most important feature of the labour movement during the Swadeshi days was the shift from agitation and struggles on purely economic questions to the involvement of the worker with the wider political issues of the day.

- The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was founded in 1920.
- IN 1918 Gandhi founded the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association.
- The AITUC in November 1927 took a decision to boycott the Simon Commission and many workers participated in the massive Simon boycott demonstrations.
- Alarmed by worker's movement, the government enacted repressive laws like the Public Safety Act and Trade Disputes Acts and arrested the entire radical leadership of the labour movement and launched the Meerut Conspiracy Case against them.
- The labour movement suffered a major setback partially due to this government offensive and partially due to a shift in stance of the communist led wing of the movement.
- From the end of 1928, the communists stopped aligning them with the national movement.
- Communists got isolated within the AITUC and were thrown out in the split of 1931.
- BY 1934, the communists re-entered the mainstream nationalist politics.
- The working class of Bombay held an anti-war strike on 2 October 1939.
- With the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, the communists changed their policy and asked the people to support the allied forces instead of holding anti-war strikes.
- The communists dissociated themselves from the Quit India movement launched in 1942.
- The last years of colonial rule also saw a remarkably sharp increase in strikes on economic issues all over the country – all India strike of the post and telegraph department employees being the most well-known among them.

Chapter 18: Struggles for Gurudwara Reform and Temple Entry

- The Akali movement
- The movement arose with the objective of freeing the Gurudwaras from the control of ignorant and corrupt priests (mahants) .
- Apart from the mahants, after the British annexation of Punjab in 1849, some control over the Gurudwaras was exercised by Government-nominated managers and custodians, who often collaborated with mahants.
- The government gave full support to the mahants. It used them to preach loyalism to the Sikhs and to keep them away from the rising nationalist movement.

- The agitation for the reform of Gurudwaras developed during 1920 when the reformers organized groups of volunteers known as Jathas to compel the mahants and the government appointed managers to hand over control of the Gurudwaras to the local devotees.
- Tens of Gurudwaras were liberated within a year.
- To manage the control of Golden Temple and other gurdwaras the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee was formed in November 1920.
- Feeling the need to give the reform movement a structure, the Shiromani Akali Dal was established in December 1920.
- The SGPC and Akali Dal accepted complete non-violence as their creed.
- There was a clash between the mahant and the Akalis over surrendering the gurudwara at Nanakana. This led to killing of about 100 akalis.
- The Nankana tragedy led to the involvement of Sikhs on a large scale in the national movement.
- Keys Affair: In October 1921, the government refused to surrender the possession of the keys of the Toshakhana of the golden temple of the Akalis. This led to protests. Leaders like Baba Kharak Singh and Master Tara Singh were arrested. Later, the government surrendered the keys to keep the Sikhs from revolting.
- Guru ka Bagh gurudwara in Ghokewala was under dispute as the mahant there claimed that the land attached to it was his personal possession. When few akalis cut down a tree on that land they were arrested on the complain of the mahant. Seeing these thousands of akalis came and started cutting down the trees. About 4000 akalis were arrested. Later, the government didn't arrest but started beating them up severely. But the alakis kept turning up. Ultimately the government had to surrender.
- The akali movement made a huge contribution to the national awakening of Punjab.
- However, the movement encouraged a certain religiosity which would be later utilized by communalism.
- In 1923, the Congress decided to take active steps towards the eradication of untouchability.
- The basic strategy it adopted was to educate and mobilize opinion among caste Hindus.
- Immediately after the Kakinada session, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee (KPCC) took up the eradication of untouchability as an urgent issue.
- KPCC a deiced to organize a procession on the temple roads in Vaikom, a village in Travancore, on 30 March 1924.

- During the processions, the satyagrahis were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment.
- On the death of Maharaja in August 1924, the Maharani released the Satyagrahis.
- Gandhiji visited Kerala to discuss the opening of temple with Maharani. A compromise was reached whereby all roads except for the ones in the Sankethan of the temple were opened to the harijans.
- In his Kerala tour, Gandhi didn't visit a single temple because avarnas were kept out of them.
- The weakness of the anti-caste movement was that through its aroused people against untouchability it lacked a strategy of ending the caste system itself.

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