

# Talassari movement in western india history essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Cause of the revolution:](#) \n \t
2. [Feature:](#) \n \t
3. [Social Movements:](#) \n \t
4. [Issues and demand addressed:](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Nature: This movement took place in the western India in Maharashtra in Thane district including the areas Jawahar , Dhanu, Mukhada, Talasari. The movement has Varli and Kathkeri tribe in its centre. The movement was cause of the exploitation of the tribes since centuries by pourtugal, Britishers, Marathas and now by the government.

### **Cause of the revolution:**

During the colonalisation period the tiller Adivasis had to pay 50-60% of revenue to these colonised landlords. The Marathas simultaneously created a class of landlords called 'Panderpesahas'. Once the Portuguese had been driven off, most of the lands were occupied by these Panderpeshas, who like their predecessors employed tenants at will and kept slaves. These Panderpeshas were usually of the higher castes (Brahmins and Prabhus) that received lands on low rates of assessment, and also held high offices, often acting as agents for the commandants of the hill forts. They also kept slaves largely to till their land. As for the tribals who were still occupying the larger parts of the up-land regions and growing 'nachni' (a coarse grain) some of them had already become the slaves of the Panderpeshas. The Maratha

system of revenue farming and increasing powers to the village head-men had led to exorbitant taxes and levies on the tribals. The tribals suffered much oppression at the hands of patils and talatis. While under the regime of the Britishers the things were liberalised to some extent but the pesantisation didn't reduce. The policy of the Britishers under Rayotwari System to give uniform land settlement under revenue collection for some period led to migration of people from other places. The most significant influx was however of the Marwari Vani, a trading community from Rajasthan, Lingayats from South Deccan and Bhatias from Kutch and Gujarat, as traders, moneylenders and shopkeepers. Alongside the Marwari, the Muslim and the Parsi communities were also to become dominant in terms of both landholding and trading. The Muslims had settled as traders in timber and grass and the Parsis had entered the liquor business. A large number of tribals who took advantage of the reduced rate of assessment to become independent ryots had to rely on the local money-lender both for seed capital and consumption loans; the right of alienation legalised the transfer of land to the moneylender, who in a short period of time acquired the status of a landlord. Thus, when grain was advanced for seed, interest equal to the quantity borrowed was generally charged, where-as for consumption loans ('khavti') to the tribal, interest in kind, equal to one half the quantity borrowed was payable at the next harvest. This led to the debt ridden tribals to sell their land to money lenders due to vicious cycle of debt. The larger land-holding ryots usually let out their lands to tribals, who cultivated it on the payment of a fixed rent. Many became tenants of Brahmin landholders under the 'ardheli' system. The absence of any institutional infrastructural facilities like credit, markets, protection against

<https://assignbuster.com/talasari-movement-in-western-india-history-essay/>

alienation and lack of education rendered the tribal an easy prey to the exploitation -by the money-lender and landlord. The process of peasantisation of the tribal and the simultaneous subsumption into a tribute paying formation was accompanied by a process of depriving the tribal of the alternate means of livelihood - forest produce. Increasingly, the practice of carting forest produce for sale to the towns and village markets came into conflict with the needs of British colonialism. Later on seeing the brawling situation they gave an area of forest to the tribals to allow them to use the forest for their livelihood except for the cutting of valuable trees. They were imposed village taxes under Jungle fee system. One of the harmful effects of this system was the indiscriminate felling of trees, once the fee had been paid, by contractors from outside the district that often employed local labourers to fell trees.

Coupe system was also started under this system, forest of each taluka or mahal was divided into blocks varying in number and size. It was calculated that a forest attains full growth in 40 years; so each block was subdivided into 40 compartments or coupes, one of which was to be cut every year in rotation; so that by the time all had had their turn, the first was ready for another cutting. In this way, it was hoped that the block was never entirely denuded. The coupes were nearly equal; an area of about 50 acres on an average, while a block comprised about 2, 000 acres. After the demarcation, each coupe was auctioned off to the highest bidder in the month of August. Cutting was allowed from September 1 till May 1 the following year, by which time the coupe was closed for ten years, and no one was allowed to except by permission. 35 In July 1896, the Collector of Thane, R E Candy, issued a

notification with-drawing all forest privileges. The reasons given were that the privileges were abused with the result that state forests were suffering losses. And as the Collector put it in the notification, in any case the coupe system was working well enough, for the tribals to get employment in. Anyone breaking the prohibitory order would suffer punishment of jail for six months and fines up to Rs 50- or both. Forced labour ('veth begar') assumed two forms. Varlis often had to borrow either grain or cash and in the bar-gain they pledged their labour for a term, which often developed into life-long servitude. As a result of lifelong servitude, say, on account of marriage expenses borne by the landowner, future generations were also often bonded to serve the landlords. For example, to raise a loan of Rs 40 towards the marriage expenses, the Varli would pledge his labour for a mini-mum of 10-12 years at a wage rate of Rs 4 per year. If the repayment was in cash, the interest would be com-pounded which the landowner/sow-kari often enforced in courts; the rules about excessive rates of interest were all too easily evaded. Under this system, the tribal [called 'lagna-gadi', marriage slave] remained bond-ed. The tribe was also made addicted to alcohol the landlord also started paying them in gallons of alcohol in spite of money. These all conditions led to the formation of various organisation fighting for the cause of the tribes. The Warlis had lost their self confident , which was also raised by these organisation.

### **Feature:**

Area of influence: These organisatio worked to empower the poor tribal; peasants about their exploitation.

## **Social Movements:**

Shetkari sabha: was formulated in 1896 against the coupe system.

Leadership: It was local group formed by Varlis.

Adivasi Seva Mandal: established in 1940 Based on Gandhian ideology. By B G Kher.

Kisaan Sabha: Established in 1945.

It basically worked on the ideology of communist party under the leadership of Shamrao and Godavari Parulekar.

Kashtkari Sangathan: Founded in 1978

Shramik Sanghatana began in Murbad taluka in 1979 with a welfare approach and then moved on to became a trade union in 1982

Role of ideology: Since the period was seeing the time phase of the Marx and Russian and Chinese revolution. These all organisation was majorly influenced by the Communist and socialist ideology. They compared the condition of China in respect to India and started to collectivise people.

## **Issues and demand addressed:**

Godavari Parulekar recalled the struggles of 1945-46. She said that the principal problem of the adivasis was land. Though the adivasi population was growing while the availability of land was not, government should start small-scale industries in the adivasi areas to provide employment to those who could not be settled on land. Kisan Sabha organised strikes for an increase in minimum wages. It was in late 1946, around Dussera-Diwali,

<https://assignbuster.com/talasari-movement-in-western-india-history-essay/>

when most tribals work on grass-cutting, harvesting of paddy, and felling of trees for the timber market, the Sabha introduced the demand for minimum wages of Rs 1. 25 as against the prevailing rates of one-two annas. The issue of the failure of Congress to implement the plans and the laws meant for improving the conditions of the adivasis. The adivasis and other oppressed people should, while defending democracy organise and struggle for the implementation of such laws those relating to debt relief, etc. After the Tenancy act of 1948 the Sabha saw its intervention as a necessary step to provide ownership of land to tribals so that they could enjoy the full produce of their labour. Kasthkari Sangathan began with conscientization through people's education.

Forms of struggle: The Adivasi Seva Mandal approached the rich for raising funds. The report of the Mandal, for instance, for 1945-46, mentions that the President of Timber Merchants' Association from Dahanu contributed to the fund. The Adivasi Seva Mandal approached the rich for raising funds. The report of the Mandal, for instance, for 1945-46, mentions that the President of Timber Merchants' Association from Dahanu contributed to the fund.. The tribes were also used by the local trading people when the any law was not in their profitability. The influx of outsiders irked the local trading class such that in 1851 some merchants of Sanjan taluka (later named Dahanu) shipped about 300 Varlis to Bombay and gathered them on the steps of the Council Hall in order to coerce the Government into repeal of the jungle fee scheme. Tensions built up to the extent that when a Forest Conservancy official toured Sanjan in 1852 in order to make a final settlement he was surrounded by some thousands of Varlis, " all of them in the same object and little

disposed to stop short even of personal violence". In 1860-67, largely as a result of local pressure, the jungle-fee scheme was abolished. In July 1896, the Collector of Thane, R E Candy, issued a notification with-drawing all forest privileges. The reasons given were that the privileges were abused with the result that state forests were suffering losses. Reaction to the notification of the took place at three levels. At the local level, a Shetkari Sabha was formed and a deputation of Varlis, Katkaris and other forest tribes numbering 2, 000 persons marched upon the District Collector, demanding removal of the notification. When the petition and the deputation were refused a hearing, there was considerable tension. A few days later Varlis and Katkaris went on riots in Dahanu and Bassein. Matters reached ahead when the Collector issued yet another notifica-tion threatening to fire upon any assembly gathered for purposes of demonstration. Yet at another level, the liberal Poona Sarvajanic Sabha took up the issue in its Quarterly Journal. In its July-Oct 1896 issue it said: " No branch of administration is so tyrannical as the Forest Department. Not content with appropriating thousands of private holdings by including them in state forests the department is continuously encroaching upon the rights of the people most of which are absolutely necessary for their subsistence or beneficial enjoyment of their property". The year (1896) being a famine year, Sabha activists had toured various parts of Bombay Presidency to evaluate the magnitude of the famine and the effects on the peasant. In this light, then, the evaluation of tribal reaction to the culture of repression must begin much earlier than the emergence of the peasant organisation (the Kisan Sabha) in 1945. The Kisan sabha was working for the Tribes in a no of issues. Their revolts were tried to suppress in different ways. The adivasis used shelter of <https://assignbuster.com/talasari-movement-in-western-india-history-essay/>



the forest and organising of the groups. It was during this period of intensified struggle, and upto the end of 1947, that the Sabha received some support from the city intelligentsia. Newspapers such as the Bombay Chronicle and Free Press Journal had provided sufficient social visibility to the exploitation of the Varlis and their agitation. Lawyers such as Raini Patel and T Godiwalla lent their legal expertise, while another barrister shifted to Dahanu, all the better to lend his legal aid. After the Tenancy Act came into being activists started visiting villages, educating tenants about their rights and reporting cases of illegal eviction to the Tahsildar. Activists undertook the task of registering the tenants and finally gave the call for claiming ownership of the land by April 1, 1957, i. e. e, Tiller's day

Response of government:

In late years before the coming of the organisation Kisan Sabha all the organisation were totally suppressed by the Britishers through forces or through minimal changes in the law like the withdrawl of the Jungle Free system. The first political action of the post-colonial State constituted a ban on the CPI and its affiliates, including the Kisan Sabha. To a large extent, this was motivated by the Telangana armed revolt which had reached its climax and also the change in the national perspectives of the CPI, now under the tutelage of B T Ranadive. In Thane, Godavari Parulekar went underground and was to remain so for four years till 1951 when she fought the first general election as a representative of the tribal areas. But other activists were arrested and the Varli movement sub-sided to a considerable extent. The provisions of the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1948 which was meant to redistribute the land to actual cultivator had a no. of <https://assignbuster.com/talasari-movement-in-western-india-history-essay/>

loopholes. One of its crucial features was regarding the clause relating to a protected tenant, and the fact that such a tenant could claim ownership rights after proving that he had cultivated the land for six years. But the accompanying clause stated that the onus of this proof rested with the landlords. An-other clause stated that the landlord could eject tenants and appropriate the lands on grounds of personal cultivation. Also, he could eject tenants for the non-payment of rent. In the circumstances, land redistribution was bound to occur and tenancy bound to vanish. Many of the Adivasis did get land. But the majority were to lose the land and join the ranks of the 'free' agricultural labourers, while the landlords having centralised the land would continue now within the limits of an expanded market. In 1976, the Maharashtra government, on the suggestion of the Central government prepared, and later introduced, a Tribal Sub-Plan. Its objectives were: " The removal of exploitation through indebtedness, land alienation, bonded labour, exploitation of lower level commercial activities like sale and purchase of forest produce.' Simultaneously, the government also passed the Maharashtra Tribal Economic Condition (Improvement) Act, with a view to breaking the " unholy alliance between the moneylenders and traders", so as "... to enable the tribals to really benefit from the schemes planned for them by the state government.

The government's stand on the movement and its claims to represent the legitimate rights and demands of the Warlis was best indicated by the statement of the provincial home minister, Morarji Desai, at a press conference held on 20th January 1947 reported as follows: I am not interested in any settlement brought about by the communists. Anything

which helps the communists in their nefarious activities will not be tolerated'[Times of India 27 January. Clearly the communist inspiration of the struggle represented a much larger challenge that threatened a political party like the Congress and its own conception of social transformation though reform not revolution

Limitation: Adivasi Seva Mandal highlighted its abysmal failure to recognise the deeper reality of tribal existence. Undoubtedly, it recognised exploitation, but it could not accept the peculiar sense of identity that the entire span of exploitation had bred among them. It failed to see that a consciousness subsumed into the relations of domination, by years of exploitation, had over the period begun to identify the exploiters as 'outsiders', i. e., non-tribals. The land was distributed to the adivasis as individual tenants but tribal were unable to cultivate their land and to emerge as independent peasant proprietors. They had to go for the credits to these money lenders and landlords and the vicious cycle of agricultural labourers was started again. Kisan Sabha started working with the government. From a militant organisation the Kisan Sabha became a developmental one engaged in getting government funds and implementing government plans.

Elements of continuity: In turn, 30 years after the Kisan Sabha, the same 'coincidence' and the limits of Kisan Sabha provided the opportunity and premise for the Bhoomi Sena and Kashtakari Sangha-tana to 'step in'.