

# Role of Revolutionaries in Indian Freedom Movement

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**Abstract:** This chapter covers the revolutionary trends in Indian freedom movement and also explores their ideological diversity, historical contexts, motivations, organizational structures, impact and influence. The aim of present study is to provide a thorough comprehension of the ever-changing character of Indian revolutionary movements by drawing on a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, as well as archival records. This study aims to chart the ideological terrain, place contemporary events in their proper historical context, examine organizational structures, evaluate the influence and effect of revolutionary movements, and investigate different types of collective resistance. The outcomes reveal the diverse range of ideological frameworks adopted by revolutionary movements in India, the socio-political conditions shaping their emergence, the motivations behind participation, the organizational strategies employed, the transformative impact on society, and the various forms of collective resistance utilised.

**Keywords:** revolutionary trends, collective resistance, motivations, ideological diversity, organizational structures.

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## I. Introduction

Revolutionary movements in modern India have played a pivotal role in shaping the country's history and trajectory. As the Indian subcontinent grappled with colonial rule under the British Empire, various ideological and strategic approaches emerged among those seeking independence. This section provides an overview of the historical context, outlining the socio-political conditions that paved the way for revolutionary activities.

The revolutionary movement in India, emerging in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, aimed to overthrow British rule. It can be divided into two phases: the early phase before World War I and the later phase after.

Colonial India was marked by deep-seated discontent and socio-economic inequalities exacerbated by British imperial policies. According to historian Bipan Chandra (1984), the exploitation of Indian resources for the benefit of British industries led to widespread poverty and discontent among the Indian populace. This discontent found expression through various means, including political agitation, social reform movements, and ultimately, revolutionary activities. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the rise of nationalist sentiments and the birth of organized political movements advocating for self-rule. However, dissatisfaction with the incremental approach of the Indian National Congress and its leadership led to the emergence of more radical ideologies advocating for immediate and forceful resistance against colonial rule.

This research is significant as it examines the several revolutionary trends in India, including their ideologies, historical settings, motives, organizational structures, impacts, and modes of collective resistance. The study's findings shed light on these factors, adding to our knowledge of the fluidity of revolutionary movements and their capacity to effect profound change in Indian society.

The present study aims to map the ideological scene of revolutionary movements in India, analyzing historical contexts, understanding motivations, examining organizational structures, assessing impact and influence, and exploring forms of collective resistance. By examining diverse ideological frameworks, contextualizing trends within socio-political conditions, and investigating motivations, organizational structures, and forms of resistance, this study seeks to provide insights into the revolutionary setting in India and its transformative potential.

## II. Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is predominantly analytical and exploratory, drawing upon both descriptive and historical approaches. It calls for the examination of previously published works as well as primary, secondary, and archival research. The study intends to thoroughly explore the ideological diversity, historical contexts, motivations, organizational structures, impact and influence, and modes of collective resistance among revolutionary impulses in India by combining these research methodologies.

### **III. Results and Discussion**

Numerous internal and external factors that inspired the younger generation are responsible for the birth of revolutionary ideas in the final years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century. The religious renaissance of the late 19th century, which was accompanied by numerous international influences, stood out among these. Among these were the American Revolution, the Irish War for Independence, the Unification of Italy, the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi, Japan's victory over Russia, and the Russian Revolution against the Tsarist Empire. These cumulative influences introduced a significant revolutionary component into the burgeoning nationalist struggle. The Indian National Congress, established in 1885 by liberal politicians, succeeded in uniting educated, upper class Indians on a common political front. Despite representing India's most progressive demographic, the Congress party failed to align with the tide of nationalism that was enveloping India by the 19th century's close. A cultural renaissance led to the revival of India's ancient past, contributing to an invigorated respect for national traditions, strengthened by a religious awakening and the rise of Hindu revivalism. Politics and religion merged, with most revolutionary leaders of the era demonstrating deep religious convictions and a profound love for their homeland and all things Indian. This sentiment was accompanied by disdain for foreign rule and Western ideas, education, and lifestyle.

Maharashtra and Bengal became prominent centres for revolutionary activities. In Maharashtra, B.G. Tilak and V.D. Savarkar provided the necessary ideological foundation, organisation, and leadership, paralleled in Bengal by Bankim Chandra, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Swami Vivekananda. Tilak offered a political and revolutionary interpretation of the Gita, inspiring a series of political and militant activities. His teachings motivated the Chapekar brothers to form the Hindu Dharm Sanrakshini Sabha, leading to the assassination of several British officers. In response to the sacrifice and martyrdom of the Chapekar brothers, V.D. Savarkar established the Mitra Mela in Nasik in 1900, later transformed into the Abhinav Bharat Society in 1904 and relocated to Poona. The society played an active role in organizing meetings, publishing materials, and celebrating festivals. The revolutionary movement in Bengal found inspiration in Bankim Chandra Chatterji's works and Swami Vivekananda's teachings, complemented by contributions from Aurobindo Ghosh. In 1901, Pramathanath Mitra formed Anushilan Samiti, joined by prominent figures such as Aurobindo Ghosh, C.R. Das, Barindra Ghosh, and Jatin Bannerjee.

Bankim's 'Bande Mataram' (Hail Mother) from Anand Math became the battle cry of the extremist party in Bengal, giving religious significance to the notion of the motherland. The novel revolutionary doctrine, or the Shakti cult, urged Bengalis to retaliate against their oppressors. Despite its ability to generate contempt for imperialists and inspire a thirst for independence, this religious revival also inadvertently alienated a significant Muslim population. External influences from international figures like Mazzini, Garibaldi, and various Irish revolutionaries, alongside significant events like Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, played a profound role in shaping the Indian revolutionary movement. B.C. Pal regarded Mazzini as a major source of new nationalism in India, while Annie Besant drew parallels between Mazzini and Aurobindo, describing them as individuals of the same mould. V.D. Savarkar even translated Mazzini's autobiography into Marathi.

#### **Beginnings of a New Revolutionary Spirit**

The global economic landscape experienced a severe downturn during the First World War. All warring nations witnessed a significant decline in their peacetime industries and agricultural sectors. The fiscal burden of the war led to the imposition of direct and indirect taxes on the working class and peasantry to refill depleted treasuries. The British administration was acutely aware of the brewing political sentiment in India during this period. Expectations were set high by President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, wartime assurances, and the Montague Declaration of August 1917. Yet, these verbal affirmations failed to satisfy both the elite and the masses, who demanded concrete actions. However, any hope harboured about British intentions was soon disillusioned with the introduction of the Rowlatt Bill, designed to stifle freedom of speech and political engagement. As the Defence of India Act was set to expire half a year after the war's end, fears of revolutionary "terrorism" and the rise of Bolshevism drove the British to arm the Indian administration with powers of preventive detention. All political parties in India, including the Indian National Congress and moderates, strongly opposed this action. Mahatma Gandhi responded by calling for widespread demonstrations and strikes. As a result, on April 13, 1919, there was the infamous Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, which indirectly contributed to a considerable rise in national consciousness. Gandhi, expressing his determination to challenge the culture that allowed such brutality, wrote to the Duke of Connaught in February 1921, stating, "We are determined to battle with all our might against that un-English nature which has made Dyerism possible."

#### **Revolutionary Movements in India: Impact and Influence**

Revolutionary movements have had a tremendous and transformational impact on India's social, political, and cultural spheres, greatly influencing social change, legislative reforms, and the restructuring of power relationships. Socially, these movements have supported an inclusive, egalitarian, and just society. Movements

like the Dalit Panthers and Self-Respect Movement challenged the oppressive caste system, promoting rights and representation for marginalized communities. They encouraged socio-economic mobility and stimulated awareness about structural inequalities, ushering in a sea change in Indian society's attitude towards caste and class. Women's rights movements, particularly post-independence, have instigated changes in traditional gender norms and catalyzed legislation promoting women's empowerment and safety, influencing the status and roles of women in society.

Politically, revolutionary movements have precipitated essential policy reforms. The Indian National Movement, for example, was instrumental in India's struggle for independence from British rule, shaping the country's foundational democratic principles. Later, movements like the Nav Nirman Movement in Gujarat and the JP Movement nationally in the mid-1970s resulted in significant political realignments and policy changes. More recently, movements such as the Right to Information and Anti-Corruption Movements have highlighted government transparency and accountability, prompting essential policy modifications. Culturally, revolutionary movements have influenced India's artistic, intellectual, and religious landscapes. The Bhakti and Sufi movements, for instance, left an indelible effect on Indian literature, music, and philosophy by questioning established religious norms and advocating for a more individual and inclusive form of spiritual expression. The Dravidian movement has also played an important role in the promotion and celebration of regional distinctions such as language and culture.

### **Forms of Collective Resistance in Revolutionary Movements**

Revolutionary movements in India have utilised a vast array of strategies and methods for collective resistance, each aligning with their unique objectives and contexts. These methods range from protests and demonstrations to strikes, armed struggle, and the formation of underground networks. Cultural activism and the creation of alternative institutions have been prominent features of these movements. Protests and demonstrations have been a primary form of resistance. These peaceful methods allow for large-scale public participation and have been crucial in movements like the Salt March led by Gandhi during the Indian independence struggle, the recent Farmers' Protests against agricultural reforms, and numerous other instances. These actions aim to communicate discontent, raise awareness, and pressure authorities into making policy changes. Strikes, both general and specific, have been another popular form of collective resistance. Industrial workers, miners, and even government employees have used strikes to protest against unfair wages, poor working conditions, and unjust policies. For instance, the Railway Strike of 1974 was a significant moment in Indian labor history.

Cultural activism involves using cultural forms like music, literature, theater, and art to resist oppression, assert identity, and mobilise people. The IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) during the freedom struggle and the Dalit Panthers' use of literature and poetry to voice caste oppression are key examples. Movements such as the Chipko movement have also used folklore and traditional songs to gather support and express dissent. The formation of alternative institutions has been a significant strategy to challenge existing power structures. These may involve alternative governance structures, like the Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) or alternative economic systems, like cooperatives. The creation of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission as an alternative economic and development model during the freedom struggle is a prime example of this form of resistance. Thus, through an array of strategies ranging from protests to cultural activism and creating alternative institutions, revolutionary movements in India have adopted various forms of collective resistance to challenge and change oppressive systems and structures.

### **IV. Conclusion**

The study has explored the revolutionary trends in India, delving into their ideological diversity, historical contexts, motivations, organizational structures, impact and influence, and forms of collective resistance. Through an analytical and exploratory approach, combined with descriptive, historical, and qualitative research methods, we have gained a comprehensive understanding of these dynamic movements. The mapping of ideological frameworks, contextualization of historical trends, examination of motivations, analysis of organizational structures, and assessment of impact and influence have revealed the complex nature of revolutionary movements in India. The exploration of various forms of collective resistance has showcased the diverse strategies employed by these movements. The results highlight the crucial part revolutionary movements have played in developing India's political and social landscape. These protests are a direct reaction to historical wrongs such as racial discrimination, political repression, economic exploitation, and cultural exclusion. They have organized people into groups, taken on established authorities, and called for radical reform.

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