

UPSC Civil Services Examination

Subject – UPSC GS-II

Topic – Zamindari System & All India Kisan Sabha

The Zamindari System in British India was a land revenue management system under the Permanent Settlement of Bengal. The settlement was between the landlords of Bengal known as zamindars and the British East India Company. The system recognised the zamindars as landowners who then let out their lands to tenant farmers in return of a share of the produce. The zamindar, in turn, had to pay a fixed sum to the British Government. This led to a lot of exploitation of the peasants.

In this article, we will discuss the impact of the various groups opposed to the zamindari system on the freedom movement. It is an important topic for the [History syllabus of UPSC](#) prelims.

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Zamindari System - Major Events

Issues related to peasants were an important part of the freedom movement from the first decade of the twentieth century. One of the issues that the national movement focussed on after 1915 was the condition of the peasantry and their upliftment. As a result, the abolition of intermediaries and by extension the zamindari system increased in importance. Here are a few important events related to reforming the land revenue system during the early twentieth century:

- The first movement spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi in India was related to peasants, which was the [Champaran Satyagraha](#) (1917) against forced indigo cultivation.
- Kheda Satyagraha (1918) against high taxation following a plague epidemic and crop failure.
- Issues regarding peasants were raised during the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928. [Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel](#) took up the issue of a 30% rise in taxes just after a major flood and resulting crop failure.
- Apart from Gandhian movements, we also find various peasant organizations, who were independently fighting for the rights of peasants of the middle and lower level. One such movement was the 'Awadh Kisan Sabha' led by Madari Pasi in the erstwhile United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh).
- Also, the issues related to agriculture and peasants were included in the list of Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme by the [Indian National Congress](#) in its Karachi session of 1931.

- A reiteration of the demands made at the Karachi session of INC(1935) was made during the Faizpur Agrarian Programme in 1936,
- A resolution for the abolition of Zamindari system was passed by the Kisan Conference held in Allahabad in 1935 presided by Sardar Patel, Bihar Kisan Sabha by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, and Andhra Riyad Association by NG Ranga.

These were some of the important steps taken towards the abolition of zamindari during the early phase of the freedom movement.

All India Kisan Sabha

The facts about All India Kisan Sabha are given in the list below:

- The All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936 at Lucknow.
- Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was the head of the Sabha
- The secretary of this association was NG Ranga.
- The motives of the All India Kisan Sabha were:
 - To abolish the Zamindari system,
 - To reduce land revenue,
 - To institutionalize credit.
- In the 1937 elections, INC got a good number of seats and formed the majority in as many as 8 provinces. The INC was in power for almost 28 months, and some legislation were brought especially in Bihar, where the land revenue was fixed at the rate of 1911 and the tenants who were tilling their lands for the past 12 years were now to become owners.
- A good number of the INC leaders were Zamindars themselves, while the peasants and workers came from another class. Thus this class clash within the INC was a hurdle, in implementing all the schemes that were visualized by Gandhi, Nehru and others.
- So, by and large, the INC failed to meet all the promises they had claimed to fulfil to the peasants. The peasants thus became disillusioned with the INC government.
- Thus, the All India Kisan Sabha felt betrayed by the INC and this is why, when in 1942, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for the Quit India Movement, the peasant leaders such as Swami Sahajanand Saraswati appealed to the peasants not to support Gandhi or the INC.
- the INC as an organization, and in its manifesto, in its ideology had always spoken about the welfare of the peasants and reforms to benefit them.

Criticism of All India Kisan Sabha

The leftists and the communists always accused the INC that there were no structural reforms suggested and attempted by the INC seriously, and whatever reforms they attempted were superficial and basically to protect the interests of Zamindars and Mahajans, etc. In 1938, the National Planning Committee also talked about the reforms related to land and peasants, and so did the Bombay Plan of 1944-45.

End of the Zamindari System

The zamindari system was finally abolished by law after independence. In 1951, the first amendment of the Constitution of India amended Article 19 and Article 31. The right to property was modified to allow the states to legislate on ending the zamindari system.

The land revenue systems of British India were an important focus of the freedom movement. In many cases, immediate triggers to various agitations as described in the preceding paragraphs. IAS aspirants should study these systems and the present land revenue system in India. They should also study the impact of land revenue systems on the people. This would enhance preparation for the history as well as economy syllabi of the [UPSC 2020](https://byjus.com/upsc/).

