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Resistance Movements against British Rule in India: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT: This comparative analysis explores the multifaceted resistance movements against British colonial rule in India from the mid-18th to mid-20th centuries. It delves into early tribal revolts, the moderate phase with the formation of the Indian National Congress, the extremist phase including the Swadeshi Movement, and the Gandhian era marked by Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience. The study examines motivations, methods, and impacts across regions, assessing socio-economic and political contexts and British responses. It highlights diverse strategies' contributions to India's path to independence, illustrating the enduring spirit of resistance that ultimately dismantled colonial dominance.

KEYWORDS: Resistance Movements, British Colonial Rule, Gandhian Era, Colonial Dominance

I. INTRODUCTION

The struggle for independence from British colonial rule in India is a multifaceted narrative marked by a series of resistance movements that spanned nearly two centuries. These movements, diverse in their motivations, strategies, and participants, collectively contributed to the eventual liberation of India in 1947. From the early tribal revolts and peasant uprisings to the sophisticated political strategies of the Indian National Congress, and from the non-violent civil disobedience campaigns led by Mahatma Gandhi to the militant actions of revolutionary groups, each phase of resistance played a crucial role in weakening the grip of British imperialism. This comparative analysis delves into the various resistance movements against British rule in India (**Rahman, 2018**), examining their unique characteristics, methodologies, and impacts, to understand how a subcontinent, so vast and diverse, united in its quest for freedom. Through this exploration, we aim to illuminate the intricate tapestry of India's freedom struggle, highlighting the enduring spirit of resistance that ultimately dismantled colonial dominance and paved the way for the nation's sovereignty.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Roy, M. (2010) Roy's examination of marginalized groups in the USA and India unveils parallels in hegemonic oppression. While showcasing resistance, Roy cautions against elite misrepresentation and continued silencing. Their work underscores the complexities within domestic colonialism, affecting familial structures and individual agency.

Kennedy, J., & Purushotham, S. (2012) The authors challenge the prevailing narrative of Indian Maoist insurgency, tracing its origins and persistence. They advocate a political lens to address adivasi grievances, emphasizing the failure of state violence and developmental approaches.

Kraemer et.al., (2013) Offering insights into anti-corporate mobilization, the study highlights conflicts within transnational advocacy networks. It elucidates the role of national actors and corporate strategies in shaping resistance movements, emphasizing the dynamic nature of advocacy processes.

Schock, K. (2013) Schock's overview delves into the evolution and concepts of civil resistance. Bridging scholarly divides, the article explores mobilization, resilience, and leverage, while comparing nonviolent and violent strategies and proposing future research directions.

Acharya, A. (2014) Acharya advocates for a more inclusive discipline of International Relations, proposing a Global IR framework. Their work emphasizes pluralism, historical grounding, and diverse agency, urging scholars to transcend Western-centric perspectives and embrace multiplex world orders.



Bedi, H. P., & Tillin, L. (2015) Examining fiscal federalism in India, Bedi and Tillin challenge simplistic notions of inter-state competition. Their study highlights nuanced subnational approaches to land acquisition within local contexts, questioning the assumed dominance of capital interests.

Grove, R. H. (2016) Grove sheds light on colonial impacts on indigenous rural societies, focusing on non-arable landscapes. Their analysis reveals transitions in land relationships and resource exploitation under colonial and post-colonial regimes, emphasizing the ecological and economic implications.

Saliba et.al., (2016) Investigating media representation of NDM-1 research, the study uncovers divergent narratives in the UK and India. It highlights the role of media framing and national contexts in shaping public discourse on scientific findings and associated controversies.

O’Gorman, R. (2017) O’Gorman explores the spread of environmental constitutionalism, identifying contextual factors influencing adoption. Their analysis underscores the significance of crisis, public engagement, and ideological shifts in facilitating constitutional amendments for environmental protection.

Rajagopal, B. (2017) Rajagopal proposes a theoretical framework for understanding social movements' impact on international law. Their analysis advocates for a cultural politics perspective, urging international lawyers to engage with resistance and marginalized voices in global governance.

Singh, S. K. (2019). Not only does the concept of nationalism serve as an organizing factor in the works of Premchand, the most prominent Urdu–Hindi writer of the 1920s and 1930s, but it also comprises a multifaceted and controversial subject of research, which has led to a variety of interpretations that are in disagreement with one another. While his nationalist tales are completely condemned for their apparent lack of radicalism, they are emphatically praised for their so-called subversive substance. On the one hand, his narratives are criticized for their seeming lack of radicalism. However, both of these schools of criticism, which are diametrically opposite to one another, have a similar flaw. This flaw is that both of them have a tendency to confuse the writer's nationalist narratives with his peasant speech, which eliminates the possibility of distinct topics leading to alternative interpretations. In order to explain how the author's politics of representation in his nationalist writings vary from the one that we find in his peasant tales, this essay investigates the topic of nationalism in Premchand's works, in general, and the matter of civil resistance in particular. In specifically, the research focuses on the question of civil resistance. It contends that, in contrast to the authorial valorisation of the fictive peasant's adherence to the exploitative status quo, civic opposition in Premchand's nationalist tales is not only essential and desirable, but it is also equivalent with dharma, which is the concept of moral responsibility.

Nilsen et.al., (2022). India finds itself at a precarious juncture that requires a critical rethinking of the political economy of the world's biggest democracy. This is because the growth of Hindu nationalist statecraft under the Modi government has brought India to this predicament. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a conceptual framework for doing so, which is built on a Gramscian rethinking of the link between law, social movements, and state creation in the long-term history of Indian democracy. We claim that social movements and the state have formed each other throughout the course of this *longue durée*, and that this co-constitution has been both mediated by and inscribed in legislation. Our argument is based on the fact that we have worked across three hegemonic shifts in Indian democracy at the same time. The most important thing that we focus on is the process of creating and dissolving compromise equilibriums between dominant and subaltern social forces in state-society relations in and through law and legal formations. This process begins with the transition to independence and continues through the dismantling of the Nehruvian state and continues up to the present day, when neoliberalization and authoritarian populism are prevalent. The paper is structured around three analytical concerns: the relationship between law and hegemony, the emergence of states as a hegemonic process, and the dialectic of power and resistance in passive revolution. In the end, we bring our thoughts to bear on the present situation in Indian democracy and how it has brought us to this point.

2.1 Comparative Reviews

Author(s)	Year	Key Focus	Main Argument/Findings	Emphasis
Roy, M.	2010	Marginalized groups in USA and India	Parallels in hegemonic oppression, resistance caution against elite misrepresentation and silencing.	Domestic colonialism, familial structures, individual agency
Kennedy, J. &	2012	Indian Maoist	Traces origins and persistence;	Political solutions to



Purushotham, S.		insurgency	advocates political lens for adivasi grievances, critiques state violence.	insurgency
Kraemer et.al.	2013	Anti-corporate mobilization	Highlights conflicts in transnational advocacy networks, role of national actors, corporate strategies.	Dynamics of advocacy processes
Schock, K.	2013	Civil resistance	Explores mobilization, resilience, leverage, nonviolent vs. violent strategies, future research directions.	Evolution of civil resistance
Acharya, A.	2014	International Relations (IR)	Advocates Global IR framework, pluralism, historical grounding, diverse agency, against Western-centric perspectives.	Inclusivity in IR
Bedi, H. P. & Tillin, L.	2015	Fiscal federalism in India	Challenges inter-state competition notions; highlights subnational land acquisition approaches.	Nuanced local contexts
Grove, R. H.	2016	Colonial impacts on indigenous rural societies	Focus on non-arable landscapes; transitions in land relationships, resource exploitation.	Ecological and economic implications
Saliba et.al.	2016	Media representation of NDM-1 research	Divergent narratives in UK and India; media framing shapes public discourse on scientific findings.	Media influence on scientific discourse
O’Gorman, R.	2017	Environmental constitutionalism	Contextual factors in adoption; crisis, public engagement, ideological shifts influence constitutional amendments.	Environmental protection through law
Rajagopal, B.	2017	Social movements’ impact on international law	Proposes cultural politics perspective; urges engagement with resistance and marginalized voices.	Cultural politics in global governance

III. EARLY TRIBAL REVOLTS AND PEASANT UPRISINGS

The early resistance against British rule in India was marked by tribal revolts and peasant uprisings, which were largely localized and spontaneous in nature. Notable examples include the Sanyasi and Fakir Rebellions (1763-1800s) in Bengal and Bihar, driven by religious ascetics and peasants rebelling against heavy taxation and economic exploitation. Similarly, the Paika Rebellion of 1817 in Odisha saw the Paika warriors rise against British encroachment. The Santhal Rebellion (1855-1856) in present-day Jharkhand involved the Santhal tribe revolting against exploitative land policies and moneylenders. These movements were characterized by immediate economic grievances and severe British suppression, setting the stage for more organized resistance in the later years.

IV. MODERATE PHASE AND FORMATION OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The Moderate Phase of the Indian independence movement began with the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. Leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Pherozeshah Mehta spearheaded this phase, advocating for constitutional methods of protest. The moderates focused on addressing issues like representation in government, administrative reforms, and the protection of civil rights through petitions, meetings, and resolutions. Their approach emphasized dialogue and negotiation with the British authorities, seeking gradual political and social reforms within the framework of British rule. This period laid the groundwork for a broader national movement by fostering political awareness and unity among the educated Indian middle class, setting the stage for more radical actions in the subsequent phases.

V. EXTREMIST PHASE AND SWADESHI MOVEMENT

The Extremist Phase of the Indian independence movement (**Manjappa, K. (2012)**), emerging in the early 20th century, marked a shift towards more radical and direct action against British rule. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Lala Lajpat Rai, collectively known as Lal-Bal-Pal, championed this phase. The partition of Bengal in 1905 by the British sparked widespread outrage, leading to the Swadeshi Movement (1905-1908), which advocated for the boycott of British goods and the promotion of indigenous industries. This movement emphasized self-reliance (Swadeshi), and included strikes, public demonstrations, and the burning of foreign goods. The Extremists'



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confrontational approach contrasted sharply with the moderates' methods, seeking to assert Indian autonomy and self-respect through more immediate and assertive means. The Swadeshi Movement galvanized a broader section of Indian society, including students, women, and workers, contributing significantly to the nationalistic fervor and laying the groundwork for future mass movements.

VI. NON-COOPERATION AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENTS

The Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements, spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi, represented pivotal phases in the Indian struggle for independence through non-violent resistance. The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) emerged as a direct response to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and other repressive measures, urging Indians to withdraw from British institutions, boycott foreign goods, and renounce British titles and honors. This movement saw widespread participation across all sections of society, signaling a unified stand against colonial rule. Following its suspension, Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement (**Haksar, V. (2002)**) in 1930, beginning with the iconic Salt March, which defied the British monopoly on salt production. This movement extended to non-payment of taxes, the boycott of British courts, and mass resignations from government jobs. Both movements emphasized self-reliance, civil rights, and non-violent protest, significantly undermining British authority and mobilizing millions in the quest for self-rule (Swaraj). The massive scale and impact of these movements illustrated the growing nationalistic sentiment and the effectiveness of non-violent resistance in challenging colonial power. (**Saleem**)

VII. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This research provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of the various resistance movements against British rule in India (**Wasiuddin, 2023**) from the mid-18th to mid-20th centuries. It examines the early tribal revolts and peasant uprisings, the 1857 Revolt, the moderate phase marked by the formation of the Indian National Congress, the extremist phase including the Swadeshi Movement, and the Gandhian era characterized by the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements. Additionally, it explores revolutionary movements led by figures like Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose. The study compares the motivations, methods, and impacts of these movements across different regions, highlighting the socio-economic and political contexts that fueled them and the British responses. It assesses the legacy and long-term effects of these movements on India's path to independence, illustrating how diverse strategies collectively contributed to the eventual liberation from colonial rule.

VIII. CONCLUSION

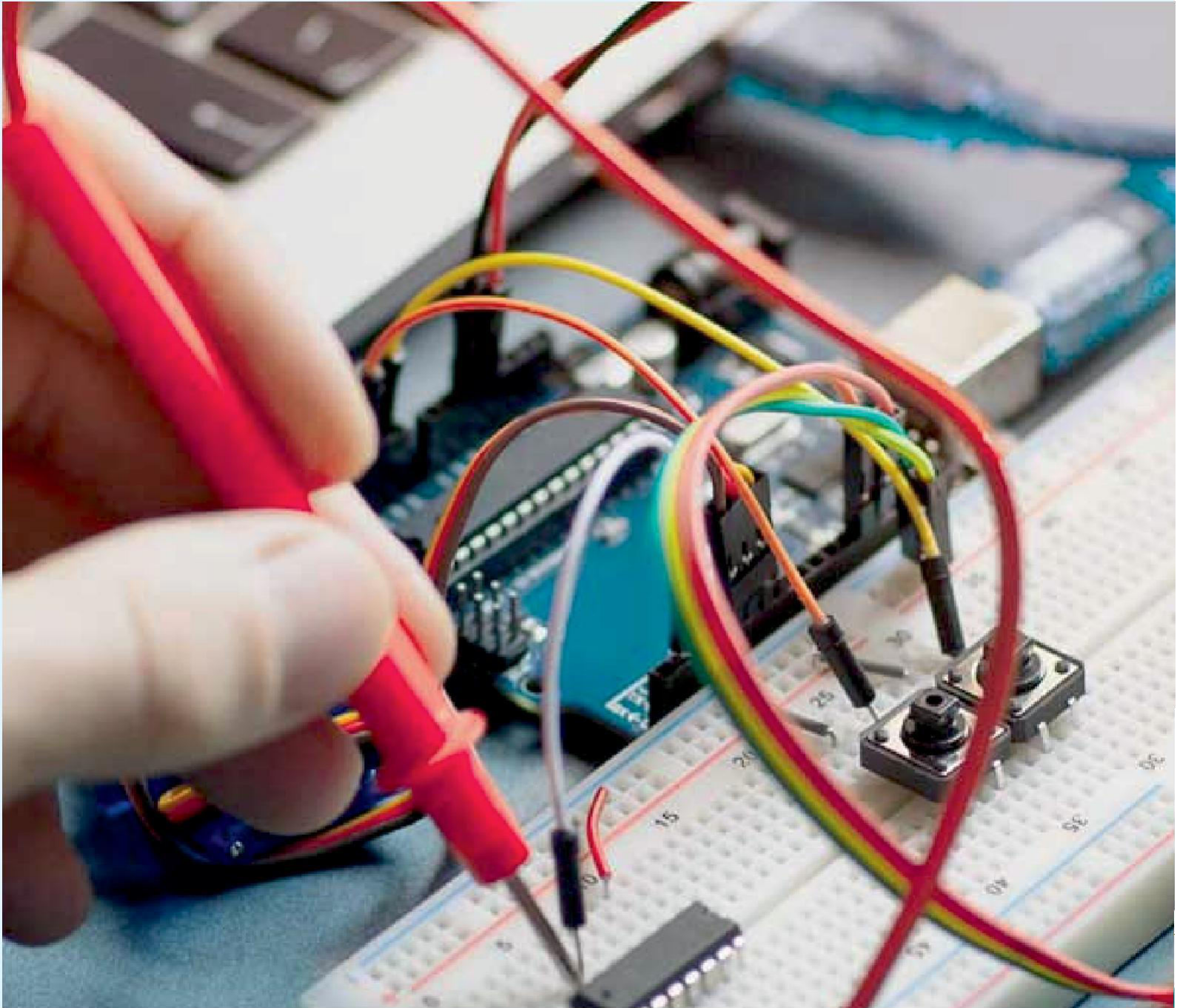
The rich tapestry of India's struggle for independence is woven with diverse threads of resistance, each contributing uniquely to the nation's journey towards sovereignty. From localized revolts to mass movements, from constitutional advocacy to militant actions, India's diverse populace united in the common goal of liberation. Through trials and triumphs, sacrifices and solidarity, the resilience of the Indian people prevailed against colonial oppression. The legacy of these movements endures, inspiring future generations with the spirit of resistance and the conviction that unity, perseverance, and non-violence can overcome even the mightiest of oppressors.

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