THIRD CHAPTER

Peasant Organization in U.P.,
Peasants Movement in Oudh, and
Other Places of U.P. -

Allahabad, Pratapgarh, Raibarielly
The peasant movement of 1920-2 and 1930-2 in Oudh, a region consisting of twelve districts in United Provinces constitutes a major landmark in the development of the peasant movement.

Oudh consisted of twelve districts in the Gangetic basin in North Central India, administered by the Nawab of Oudh within the Mughal Empire. The semi feudal structure of land control in Oudh; led the landed aristocracy to play an important role before and after the decline of Mughal Empire. Between 1775 AD to 1856 most the area of united provinces was conquered by the British East India Company. And British brought the Agra and Oudh regions into a single administrative frame work for a variety of regions but their agrarian structure were dissimilar until 1939.

Taluqdar of Oudh formed the dominant class of rent-collecting intermediaries, managing to build estates; in the pre-British days and thus acquire an independent political status. But after the annexation of Oudh the British considered the Taluqdar as reactionary and oppressive class and hence their land revenue settlement policy was aimed at weakening the taluqdars.01

But in the Mutiny of 1857 taluqdars participated in large scale and convinced the British that they wielded considerable power; and the British after the mutiny regarded them as the national leaders of the people. As a result full proprietorship right in land was given to them alongwith powers
to evict their old tenants and to admit new ones. In return the taluqdars extended their loyalty and support to the Raj.

In the post mutiny era the British were naturally anxious to prevent agrarian discontent and passed some progressive agrarian legislation; and tenancy act of 1901 was passed by the U.P. legislative council enabling a tenant to acquire occupancy right if he held the same land continuously for a period of twelve years; with which about 90% of the tenants in Agra province were benefited. The act however did not apply to districts in Oudh where the tenantry was still insecure. Certain changes in agrarian structure of Oudh accompanied by an ineffective rent law and growing demands for the land among tenants cultivation had led the development of social tensions. The chief among them being the conflict between land lords and their cultivating tenants; so, the peasant movement in Oudh assumed the dimensions of a class war as the desperate peasantry resorted to militant action on a large scale in Raibareilly district. The resentments that the peasants fell at their exploitation by the land lords were however expressed in a vocal and articulate manner only towards the end of the second decade of the 20th century. This happened after some peasants organized themselves into Kisan Sabhas and demanded the amelioration of their poor material condition from both the government as well or the land lords. *Nazarana* and *bedkhali* were the tributes or money which was given to land lords by the tenants and this type of rent had no account. If the peasants found themselves unable to give *nazarana*, they were forced for the eviction from their holdings (*Bedakhali*) owing to these grievances led the formation of Kisan Sabha; since the peasantry had no formal organization; so in 1917 U.P. Kisan Sabha was formed at Allahabad by a small group of nationalists;
who were participating in the home rule movement. And the home rule league advanced a sum of 4000/- to this Sabha for the purpose of organization. First meeting of the U.P. Kisan Sabha was held on 11th, Feb. 1918 (at Triveni Ghat, Allahabad). And the U.P. Kisan Sabha conference was held under the Shamians of India Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha and attended by Pd. Madan Mohan Malviya, Pd. Krishna Kanta Malviya and Pd. Gauri Shankar Mishra. Under the aegis of the political leader of Allahabad and specially under Malviya’s patronage the activities of U.P. Kisan Sabha began to spread out in various districts. But the nature of this sabha was moderate policy of Prayar and Petitions dominated by the Malviya group, this sabha took pains to take peasants delegates to the congress session and raise their grievances from the platform.

The middle class leaders in the congress paid no need to the peasant grievances they even objected to the exemption of delegate fee for peasant’s delegates. The presence of peasant’s delegates in the congress session was used by the congress leadership to show that their organization had a rural backing.

On 30-31 January 1919 annual conference of kisan sabha was held and Purushottam Das Tandan become the president. On June, 1920 Ramchandra led a few hundred tenants to Allahabad from the Jaunpur and Pratapgarh (districts) who were 500 in number (according to Mehta). They met Gauri Shankar Mishra and J.L. Nehru whom they apprised of the pathetic situation that prevailed in their districts. They invited the Allahabad political leaders to the interior of the country side to see for themselves in the poor condition of the tenants. Third and Fourth annual conference of the
kisan sabha were also held at Prayag; but on 7th February, 1921 in fourth session J.L. Nehru and Tandan had clashes with the peasant leaders since Nehru emphasized on the non-cooperation proposal.

Indra Narayan Diwedi in his articles raised the problems of peasants and stated that struggles of Oudh peasants had no formal links with kisan sabha organization; beside there was no any big movement against the Zamindars by the tenants; although some small incidents are mentioned. On 17, June, 1921 the government of the united provinces sent a telegram in which riots in Farukabad between tenants and zamindars and five dead were reported, which had no political importance since the case was of enmity long back. The causes of discontent among tenants were rather economic the feminine of 1920-21 had effected the entire economy of peasants and all the government rules were purely in favour of zamindars. Since all the zamindars were working like a bridge between peasants and British government; so, they had a great impact on the policies of government, as a result all land reforms or acts were in favour of land lords. Awadh and Agra had different tenancy acts. In Awadh peasants had temporary holdings; they could not be easily organized.

On 13, January, 1921, viceroy himself remarked about the tenancy act that it needs reforms since it was working in favour of zamindars. Government reports based on the information of authorities accepted that the discontent and burden of peasants was due to economic cause not political. Even the tenancy act of Agra was also savings the rights of zamindars and was exploiting peasants and was full of discontent and disappointment. As a result Uttar Pradesh experienced the condition of feminine in some places of
Mirzapur. Conditions were worsened by the rent demands of zamindars. Through *ABHUDAYA* a relief fund was demanded for these areas of Mirzapur in the year 1920 A.D.

In Awadh region zamindari system was oppressive than other regions. Under new rule a big part of agricultural land, jungle and irrigation facilities were under the direct control of zamindars. Peasants were tenants without right; and were depend on the mercy of the money lenders. And Zamindars were exploiting them badly. According to the national commission of agriculture in Uttar Pradesh graph of poverty was higher than those of other regions in India. After First World War the wages of agricultural labour was four annas where as it were twelve annas in Punjab. Nehru had to accept the fact that it was economic causes which led the farmers to prolonged poverty in Awadh region. Bedakhali was unbearable in Awadh region and numbers of landless labours were increasing in the region.

Even the government of India also accepted the fact that the zamindars of U.P. and Bihar are compelling the peasants for *begars*. Most of the peasants were living under the burden of debts. They were taking money not only for agricultural purpose but also for un-productory activities. And the rate of interest used to so high that they could never pay back; so the freedom of peasants were kept in the lockers of money leaders for decades. According to the central bank enquiry committee the rural areas had a debt of 124 crores in the year 1929 a.d. The condition of the peasants was so worse that the common tenant was disappointed and was in anguish; which could at any time emerge into a revolt. Since agrarian activites were
the only source of income for the tenants and the tenants in Awadh were temporary owners of the lands. So the discontent had taken form of social tension; in other words class warfare had broken out. But in Raibarelli, Fyzabad, Pratapgarh and Sultanpur entire peasants’ agitation was influenced by the leadership of Baba Ramchandra. J.L. Nehru believed in these districts. The leadership talent of Baba Ram Chandra led the movement ahead. It is true that the Awadh Kisan Movement threw up a leadership in the form of “Babas” or what may be termed as “Political Sadhus” they legitimized their political messages by infusing them a religios content. And Babas sprang up throughout the Lucknow, Fyzabad, Gorakhpur divisions of Awadh. They rallied the large gatherings of peasants who flocked to their standard with cries of “Ram Chandra Ki Jai” and “Sita Ram Ki Ji” and with readings from Tulsidas’s Ramayana. Employing the traditional panchayat as their structural model, they organized so called Kisan Sabhas whose purpose was to articulate peasant grievances with the land lords and press for reforms in the agrarian system. The most famous of these early political Babas was a man, named Sri Dhar Balwant Jodhpukar who was born in Neemuch district of Bombay Presidency, became a wanderer at age thirteen, found his way to fizi (where he changed his name to Ram Chandra Rao) became a Sadhu in Awadhaya in 1909, settled in Pratapgarh in 1919, and in the words of the police records of the day “almost immediately started spreading disaffection among the peasantry. By the time he reached Awadh, Ram Chandra had a political agenda and a wealth of experience and his success lay partly in his utilization of caste solidarities. Ram Chandra married of a woman of the Kurmi caste one of the major middle class of this region and commenced calling himself “Baba Ram Chandra”. Moing around the region with a copy of the Ramayan under his arm he blended
readings from this popular Hindi epic, which combined allegorical denunciations of both the Raj and the land lords, with appeals to the peasantry to act in concert against their exploiters. He used to motivate the people against unjust by giving numerous examples from Ramayana. A legend in his own time, Baba Ram Chandra became the model par excellence of the indigenous peasant politician. He was a major force in broadening the political impact of the first kisan sabha that had been established in 1917 by Jhingury Singh and Sahdev Singh at Rure in Gorakhpur district.

Baba Ram Chandra urged the national leaders of congress party to assist the peasants. Nehru visited in the rural areas and found that tenants were organizing and were hopeful in future. Nehru found the peasants movement at pace and strong. By the passage of time peasants started disobedience of railway officers and started traveling without tickets for their organizational activities. In 1920 a.d. peasants were even freed from the Jails under the pressure of peasant’s mob. Nehru regards it a big victory of peasants which enhanced in confidence of peasants. The new year began with the jacqueries of the Awadh peasants. The peasants in their thousands, moved from one state to another destroying the crops of taluqdars in tehsil Dalmau. The chief architect of the movement, Baba Ram Chandra, was now organizing the peasants in Barabanki and the urban politician were busy with congress programme preached harmony.

The talukdars were frightened at the sight of the peasant’s class interests. The taluqdars association of Raibarely met at Salon to devise means to bring into disrepute the kisan sabhas, so as to foment a
confrontation with government for that alone they thought could shore up their sagging power and authority in the countryside. So, the peasants attempted on their own to overthrow the tyrannical yoke not only of the landed aristocracy but also of Mahajans and Banias who had always been a source of their exploitation. The organized strength of the peasants and each celebration of their achievement through rumour strengthened the actual and symbolic force of “peasant insurgency” in Oudh. The tenantry it was reported, “generally were drunk with the new wine.”

The first incident in the massive agrarian upsurge took place on 2nd January 1921, when the crops belonging to Sardar Nihal Singh were destroyed by a large crowd at Aundhu and soon peasants revolt broke out in southern Oudh against the oppressors. On 3rd January crops belonging to taluqdar Ram Pratap Singh of Chichandi were destroyed. After some time at Gaura and Guta similar incidents took place on 4th January 1921 more than 3000 men assembled in the tehsil Courtyard at Salon. This assembly of tenants demanded exemption from ejectments.

On 5th January 40 persons led by Ram Gulam Pasi entered Deeh Bazaar in Tilo  estate and forced the cloth merchant to sell cloth at 4 annas, a yard. When the Bania Badaria refused to do so, his shop was looted. On the same day Rup Chand another cloth merchant was looted; but no harm was done to him. Sardar Birpal Singh’s store was looted at Khurehti by about 500 persons on 6th January 1921. Sardar Nihan Singh’s godown was looted and the office of Zilledar was destroyed. The incident that occurred at Chandania on 5th January was of a more serious nature, as it had a far-reaching impact. Taluqdar Tribhuwan Bahadur Singh was hated because of his oppressive and immoral practices. He was influenced by a prostitute.
The crowd of peasants led by Baba Janki Das was going towards Narinderpur. Charhar and on the way they met Anmol Sharma, a local kisan leader who had been ejected by talukdar. Anmol Sharma brought the kisan to the talukdar’s house in order get redressed of their grievances. The other version was that taluqdar himself invited the peasants to listen their grievances and also informed authorities of their intended violent conduct. It is said that the Deputy Commissioner had prior information about the crowd going towards Chandania and had sent armed police there overnight. The peasants demanded the ouster of Achhijan and the restoration of the real rani (taluqdar’s wife). They also demanded exemption from Nazarana and no more ejectments. The first demand indicates that the mistress used to interfere with estate management. The taluqdar refused to oblige the peasants as a protest the peasants surrounded his house. In the meantime, the Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by a large police force. The three leaders Janki Das, Anmol Sharma and Badri Narayan Singh were arrested. The peasants blocked the path by lying prostrate. Baba Janki Das appealed the peasants to let them go with the authorities and follow them to Raibareilly as justice would be done there. Had Janki Das not urged the peasants it would have been difficult to arrest the leaders. So, the authorities at Raibareilly described Janki Das as “absconding offender” with some other charges as well on 6th January, the peasants were fired upon at Fursatganj Bazar, when the peasants were looting it.

The crowd numbering about 400 men protested against raising the slogans Ram Chandra Maharaj Ki Jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai, Saukat Ali, Mohammad Ali Ki Jai. The peasants complained about the dearness of grain and cloth and the high handedness of taluqdars. The magistrate ordered the
crowd to withdraw from the market and instead go to Raibarelly for filling an application regarding their grievances. The “crowd” soon swelled to between 8,000 to 10,000 men and accused the Banias of making heavy profits at the cost of peasantry and warned them to sell the cloth at 4 annas a yard or face plunder.

The guards were ordered to fire in the air but this could not terrorize the peasantry who believed that a few police men could do nothing. When the people attempted to remove some articles from the shops and firing was ordered. Shots were fired in all directions, six persons died and twenty four were arrested. The firing continued for 15 to 20 minutes and 59 shots were fired to restore calm. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate’s accusation that the aim of crowd had been to loot the bazaar can not be justified for it did not loot the bazaar. Moreover the only looted article the police discovered was some tobacco. The peasant movement in district reached its climax when on 7th January the defenceless peasants were fired upon for the second time at Munshiganj bridge on the outskirts of Raibarelly town.

The news of the arrest of peasant leaders at Chandania had spread like a wild fire. Almost 80 to 90% of the peasants present at Chandania had walked on foot to Raibarelly in order to show their solidarity with the arrested leaders. The first batch of 660 men went to the jail to see their leaders. Actually the peasants thought it was Ram Chandra who had been taken prisoner and they were out for getting him released again as they had succeeded in doing so at Pratapgarh. In fact in Chandania the peasants were not sure about the arrested leaders. Some believed that Ram Chandra had been arrested while some deluded or had deluded themselves into belief that
Mahatma Gandhi had been taken into custody. Farnon wrote; “from village to village cry came and was taken up and spread that Babaji had been arrested, that every household must send one man at least to arrest in his release.” Another version was that oath had been administered to go to Raibarely and if the persons did not go they were threatened for social boycott. The first batch had been put behind the bars. After some time a crowd led by a Fakir (Saint), Rahmat Ali Shah approached the jail demanding Babaji’s darshan and an end to taluqdari oppression.

Sardar Nihal Singh was the local taluqdar took the Deputy Commissioner, sheriff in his motor car to the place of congregation; sheriff told the people that their leaders had been sent to Lucknow jail and would not be released. He stated that Baba was an “absconding offender”. He rebuked the peasants for coming in a mob to represent their grievances and “demand impossible.” This crowd was pressed across the Munshiganj Bridge by labour corps men. On the other side of the bridge it was joined by fresh crowds.

The Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, and many others reasoned with the crowd to disperse. Around 11 am sherreff signed out Bhagwati Prasad, the municipal commissioner, and took him to jail in Birpal Singh’s car only to be left in custody; his sole offence being that by pretending to disperse the crowd he had actually detained it. Some kisans who were cooking food, were allowed to remain in vacated area on the condition that they surrendered their lathies, when all efforts of the pleaders failed to move the kisans. Police force drove the tenants by 200 to 300 yards in an hour’s time and it was during this action that the firing started. Jawahar
Lal Nehru arrived there when the tussle was going on at Munshiganj.\textsuperscript{26} The news of his arrival was sent to sherreff who immediately sent a pencil note which described his presence in the district as undesirable and Nehru was asked to leave the station by next train. The Deputy Commissioner was advised to enlist Nehru’s cooperation in quietening the people and make their disperse Nehru along with a number of Raibarelly congressmen, started on foot for Munshiganj.

They were prevented from going near the military as firing was going on. Nehru addressed about 3000 to 4000 kisans on the tried his level to make the crowd peaceful. He urged the people to work for the attainment of Swaraj through which they would gain deliverance.\textsuperscript{27} Thousands of peasants were sent to jail. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police both refused to admit that they had given orders to open fire. The authorities said that one Subedar Hakim Singh fired in self defence.\textsuperscript{28} When Hakim Singh was asked to he said his pistol went off accidentally.\textsuperscript{29} The official story was that firing started after a heavy shower of stones by the mob and the mob of tenants were trying to enter city. The sole offence of the crowd was its refusal to disperse. The popular version was that even Sardar Birpal Singh also fired some shots. A number of witnesses testified, during the trial of the Pratap defamation case\textsuperscript{30} of having seen the Sardar fire. Sardar took the case to the court.

Another first hand account was of Piarelal, a lobourer in the labour corps, who was an orderly to Subedar Hakim Singh, found the Sirdar firing towards right and two shots to the left when he was going to give food to his officer.\textsuperscript{31} And on next day a red-turbaned government \textit{chaprasi} went round
the city announcing at the beat of dram that the Sardar had not fired at all and was not responsible for the causalities of the tenants.\textsuperscript{32} The Deupty Commissioner praised the Birpal Singh for assisting the authorities and stated that he had led firing is entirely false. The official figures of causalities at Munshiganj were four dead and 14 wounded; but the local version was that about hundred persons had died and their bodies had been thrown. Overnight in the Gangas near Dalmau which were carried on Lorries from the place of occurance.\textsuperscript{33} A wave of anger swept throughout the united provinces at this miniature Jaliawala episode. A meeting was held in Kanpur to condemn the firing.\textsuperscript{34} The national press also condemned this act with one voice. But the Raibarelly authorities were praised by the spencer Harcourt Butler (who was imperial representative in the United Provices) for the services rendered to the throne by establishing order in the province. Specially Sirdar Birpal Singh, Taluqdars and the police who had done so well in restoring order.\textsuperscript{35} On the same day some cloth merchant were looted at Bamanpur and Thagwan on their refusal of lower prices. Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh had sent a report to the government of India that in Southern part of Raibarelly the incidents of dacoities were increased.\textsuperscript{36} And the government was crush the popular uprisings by cracking the ring leaders who incited the masses; rather than in the removal of socio-economic grievances. Eight men were arrested at Salon; their offence being that they were the Panchas (heads) of the panchayats which were against the government.\textsuperscript{37} A head of Dargah (Muslim holy shrine) was also arrested. He went to Raibarelly to apologies to the Deputy Commissioner, he stated that he was under pressure and promised to assist the government in future. Another kisan worker Kalka Prasad was arrested and a bond of Rs. 5000 was demanded from him. Pandit Martand Vaidya, the vice president of District
Kisan Sabha was arrested along with his 16 other peasants. Martand Vaidya had urged Nehru to visit the country side of Raibareelly.

The government the armed police from the neighboring districts and the army was kept on its alert. A correspondent of the pioneer translated Kisan Sabhas as “Soviets”. Even he sent a report to the London press that in the whole region of Raibareily Soviets of rebels were formed. The Secretary of state was annoyed at his ignorance about the setting up of “Soviets” and he held the Governor-General responsible for this. However the Indian Government clarified that there was nothing like “Soviet” in the country. The government stated that these activities were done by non-cooperators under the control of Mahatma Gandhi and suspected the same in the entire Awadh region.

On the other hand the widely advertised meeting at Unchahar was scheduled to give the message of the Nagpur congress to the peasantry and at the same time to decide the problem of with holding payment of rent in consultation with Ram Chandra. The congress had not considered the issue of non-payment of rent as a part of the non-cooperation programme. There was a great rush of kisans to attend this meeting. The peasants were informed by the Kisan Sabhas “That it was Gandhi’s order that they are to go” and they will be provided food in the name of Gandhi”. They did not even buy the tickets. The government had banned public meetings in the troubled districts of Oudh but permission had been granted to hold this meeting. The nationalist leaders decided to postpone this meeting and sent messages to the adjoining districts but the Kisans thought it to be a trick on the part of the police and taluqdars to minimize their attendance. And Kisans
were sent back from Lucknow station by the urban leaders. At Unchahar J.L. Nehru, Madan Mohan Malviya and Gauri Shankar Mishra urged the peasants to return to their homes.

This was a bitter disappointment for the kisans who had come from long distances to attend the meeting. The sermon of non-violence by the congressmen could not pacify the Raibareily peasants. The peasantry of Sehagaon Panchimgaon, a village under Bachhrawan police station, avenged the killings of Munshiganj by killing one constable with lathi and two injured. According to official version, the villagers had turned the taluqdar’s cattle loose in his sugarcane field. This was a protest against the taluqdar’s oppressive mentality. Salik and Ram Autar were the ring leaders who instigated the tenants against the police guard. The crowd attacked the police guard who fired in self defense. The women folk pelted bricks from their housetops on the policemen. The ring leaders were arrested.

The other side of the story says that due to the natural calamity the village bazaar had been shifted some years back from its original place to the land belonging to the taluqdar. Now the bazaar was again shifted back to the original place, on the taluqdar levied taxes; which resulted in a financial loss to the taluqdar.

On 23rd January taluqdar’s men assisted by the policemen abused the village people and ordered the bazaar to be shifted back to the taluqdari premises. The village folk resented the order. The policemen fired and 12 people were injured. In retaliation villagers attacked the policemen in which one constable died and two other injured. Ram Autar and Salik were sentenced to death by the English Court.
The peasant revolt soon replied to Fyzabad district. This district was full of landless agricultural labourers who were about 88,296, the highest in Oudh. And these castes were economically weakest due to their dependence on the higher caste who hired them as labourers. The wages of the agricultural labourers had not risen since 1873 A.d which was Rs. 4 monthly. Deo Narain the kisan sabha’s leader persuaded the ploughmen not to work at old wages for the zamindars. And consequently the peasants and the tenants went on strike which soon turned into the revolt against their oppressions. In Fyzabad district Akbarpur and Tanda tehsils were the first where peasants upsurge took place. On 12th January zamindars of Dhankara village were looted. Peasants were instigated to do Hartals and violence in the name of Gandhiji and Gandhi Raj; on the name of Gandhi people were forced to indulge in loot. On 13th and 14th January 1921, large crowds of landless labours looted the zamindars, banias, sunars (goldsmiths) and well to do cultivators. Grain stores were looted. Women belonging to the upper classes were humiliated and maltreated and abused by the groups of the oppressed women. When the armed police came 346 persons were arrested. The police claimed to have recovered cartloads of loot. According to the official estimates 114 houses were looted in 31 villages, resulting a loss of worth Rs. 2 lakhs. The government sanctioned Rs. 5000 for the relief to the victims. Big zamindars and feudal lords were petrified with fear and could do nothing to resist. Initially the local inhabitants helped the police against rioters, but they refused to do so when the leaders of Kisan sabha came into the scene. In Sultanpur on 6th January, Deo Narain had been sentenced to one week’s imprisonment for insulting the Inspector of Schools
on his question of rasad.48 He was taken to jail on the tum-tum (horse driven cart) of an advocate. On 19th January Deo Narain and Kedarnath were assaulted by Alopì, a Brahmin zamindar who regarded them as instigators and as such responsible for the insult of his womenfolk during the “riots”.49 Deo Narain accused the police for instigating the assault. On 20th January, he sat outside the police station demanding an apology from the station officer. The news of assault led the gathering of 7000 to 10000 men who had lathies in their hands. The Deputy Commissioner received information that more peasants were advancing towards Baskhari. The commissioner sought for a compromise with Deo Narain. An agreement was reached that Deo Narain would ask the crowd to disperse while an enquiry would be made into the affair. The crowds then dispersed. Faruq Ahmed a faqir gave a revengeful statement “Gandhi would ascend the throne of Delhi on 15 February” and three lakhs of English ladies would be distributed at the Guhauna Sabha.50 It was a retaliation against the treatment meted out to peasant womenfolk by the landlords. On 22nd January Nehru arrived in Fyzabad. He visited the countryside and troubled area advising the peasants to remain patient condemned any violence and preached non-cooperation.51 On 27th January about 30,000 to 40,000 peasants gathered at Guhuana a village in police circle Akbarpur, to know the results of the enquiry of the Baskhari affair. The meeting was now dominated by the congressmen and Jawahar Lal Nehru presided; where looting were condemned and easants were urged to participate in non-cooperation as Swaraj was the only remedy for the redressal of their grievances.52 Nehru told the peasants “only by coloured clothes they should not believe that every person was a real Sadhu and a messenger of Mahatma Gandhi”, peasants were told to condemn the
plunders. The congress and khilafat leaders were all eager to divert the peasantry to the path of non-cooperation against the government.

On 29th January, 2 policemen were assaulted at Baskhari where they had gone to report on a Kisan meetings. It seems that the frustration of peasant at Guhauna, where the Baskhari affair had been side-tracked led the peasants to do so. The Deputy Commissioner rushed to the scene where 13 persons were arrested and many documents were seized from them revealing the methods, aims, and objectives of the kisan movements. These documents revealed that peasants wanted to follow the extreme form of non-cooperation. One of the seized documents contained a list of officials, such as Deputy Commissioner, Captain Sahib, and Daroga (police inspector), for a parallel administration etc. An interesting part of the uprising led by Suraj Prasad alias Chotta (small) Ram Chandra was more revolutionary in character. He had been active in Fyzabad and Sultanpur districts since 1918. From October 1920 onwards he started his direct activities against the taluqdars and the government. He declared himself the ruler of a particular area and denounced the entry of police into that area and arrested a policeman on patrol duty. He abolished all zamindari rights in his area. He imposed fines on government servants and pensioners. People from the lower castes assembled at his meetings. Taluqdar Kesari Prasad Singh sent hysterical telegrams to the commissioner demanding Suraj Prasad’s arrest. Even the non-cooperators were frightened by his activities. Suraj Prasad and 17 others were arrested on 29th January. They were all sent to Fyzabad jail in a special train. The news of arrests spread like wild fire and soon several thousand kisans gathered at the Gosainganj railway station. Among the crowds were a number of sepoys or ex-sepoys. There was a pitched
battle between the police and the kisans. The police opened fire and dispersed the peasants.\textsuperscript{57}

The peasant Jacqueries in Fyzabad had died down, yet the government remained on tenterhooks. Butler decided to dispatch a column of troops through Fyzabad and Sultanpur districts to show the population that British Raj was still a factor which they had consider seriously. The presence of force proved to be a moral booster for the zamindars who were assured that the government was on their side.\textsuperscript{58} Now they got opportunity to register false cases against the tenants. By April 1921, there were 442 under trial prisoners in the Fyzabad jail in connection with agrarian disturbances. Three persons died in the jail, two from pneumonia and one from apoplexy. They were all in blooming health when arrested. Sultanpur the neighbouring district of Fyzabad was also affected by the agrarian revolt. There were 34 taluqdar in Sultanpur. The taluqdar of Amethi paid more than Rs. 2 lakhs as land revenue. Three taluqdar paid between 50,000 to Rs. One lakh; the kisan movement initially started here by the landless men against those holding land. There were 82,959 agricultural labourers in Sultanpur. The chamar were the main supporters of the movement. They were getting low wages. According to official version the high caste people opposed the movement and in some caces zamindars had been successful in turning out the agitators from their villages. Kedar Nath, Deo Narain and Raghunandan Sadhu the tree prominent leaders were arrested in the first week of February. Their speeches fanned the simmering discontent of the peasantry into an open revolt.\textsuperscript{59} The authorities were afraid of trying there persons in Sultanpur. The Deputy Commissioner required “at least a complete battalion of infantry and a force of two hundred armed police”\textsuperscript{60} for maintaining peace
and order in the district during the trial. The government wanted to transfer their cases for trial to Lucknow and at the same time to terrorise the people as well. The troops started from Fyzabad and district administration resorted a policy of repression. The administration declared the kisan sabha meeting illegal and arrested twenty persons in village Rawanion. The zamindars let loose their lathiwalas (band of men armed with sticks) on the villagers because the presence of troops gave them an opportunity to score against the tenantry. The government and the zamindars joined hands to repress and terrorise the village folk. Some villages were run by the rural revolutionary forces, when the military reached there the Deputy Commissioner arrested the ring leader. And these prisoners were marched along with the troops, perhaps with a view to demoralizing their followers. The villagers were forced to provide rasad for the troops and refusal to supply rasad resulted in punishments. The villagers and school children was called upon to give *salami* (salute) to the troops.⁶¹

The revolutionary trends of the peasants alarmed the congress leaders because the tenants did not like their idea of non-violence on many occasions when the congress men had addressed the kisans on the non-cooperation, the kisans had refused to listen.⁶² The congress men were trying to capture the peasant movement from rural leadership. Thus Abdul Bari was instructed by Moti Lal Nehru to send Ram Chandra to Allahabad in complete secrecy. In his presence, at a meeting in Anand Bhawan, Motilal Nehru was declared president of a newly formed U.P. Kisan Sabha. This sabha was launched in opposition to the Malaviya led Kisan Sabha because Malviya led Kisan Sabha was opposed to non-cooperation and in this way
Moti Lal could embarrass Malviya. Ram Chandra exhorted the peasantry to prepare them selves for the coming battle;

“Now we shall have to flight for our honour lives will be sacrificed land and houses will have to be given. These rich and honourable persons (Urban politicians) will clash among themselves on the strength of your support”. It will take another fifteen or twenty years for the redressed of your real grievances. In fact, the non-cooperators had been trying since October 1920 to turn the U.P. Kisan Sabha into a non-cooperating body but without any success. The U.P. congress committee wanted the Kisan to follow its advice. The non-cooperators disturbed the arrangements for meeting of U.P. Kisan Sabha at the sewa samiti premises. The secretary of the U.P. Kisan Sabha, Indra Narayan Dwivedi, was described as an opponent of Mahatma Gandhi. Dwivedi wanted to shift the venue of the meeting which led to the arguement between P.D. Tandon and Dwivedi one group of the peasants held their meeting at Triveni Ghat in which Moti Lal Nehru become the president of the U.P. Kisan Sabha. The other leaders led by Dwivedi held their meeting at Bhadurganj the changed venue? Where Radha Kant Malviya was elected president. In this way the urban politicians of the congress succeeded in dividing the Kisan Sabha into non-cooperators or Swarajists and anti-non-cooperators. The later wanted to fight for the demands of the peasantry on legal and constitutional lines, while the former wanted peasant’s mobilization for the Swaraj. There was only one point of agreement between the two-i.e. the peasant’s movement should not at all be revolutionary. The leaders were engaged to hold on the peasantry and peasant organizations. But the government was worried over the issue of Baba Ram Chandra’s arrest; who had ignored the summons many times. He
was charged of promoting enmity between classes for his inflammatory speeches delivered at Barabaniki in early January. He was arrested after the opening ceremony of Kashi Vidhya Peeth. Ram Chandra was transferred to Lucknow and under the strictest surveillance. Even the railway staff was not allowed to remain on the platform until the special train left the Benaras Station. Ram Chandra’s removal from the scene and the subsequent arrest of all rural leaders left the non-cooperators free to establish their hegemony over the peasants. The credulous peasantry was led to believe that the congress stood for the immediate redressed of their grievances but not even a feeble voice was raised in their favour from the congress platform. Gandhi avoided all direct contacts with the leaders of the Oudh kisan movement during his visits to these areas.

Gandhi considered the kisan movement as being “interior to and independent of” non-cooperation movement and Gandhiji issued a written instruction to the peasants. These included; complete adherence to non-cooperation, not to stop services to the landlords, not to withhold taxes from the government or rent from the land lords, to follow the advice of Nehru; to carry out all the government orders, not to prevent the arrest of any of the leaders. In this way non-cooperators had infiltrated so deeply into the kisan movement that in Raibarelly it was difficult to distinguish between the three streams the kisan sabha, the congress, the khilafat committee. On 20th March, 1921 a serious agrarian “riot” broke out at kharia. The kisan movement had gained strength in the Naruddinpur estate of Salon pargana in Raibarelly district. The brain behind the organization was Brijpal Singh a military sepoy who prepared the peasants against the taluqdars. Deputy Commissioner had to fire many times while initiating the arrest proceedings.
The government was determined to suppress revolutionary activity among the rural masses; as a result many were wounded and died in Kharia riot. Among the prisoners convicted in the Raibareily “disturbances” 18 were over 50 years old. There is only one case in which the taluqdar agents were punished to three months imprisonment for their oppressive methods in Raibarely.67

While the neighbouring districts had seethed with agrarian upsurge, Pratapgarh remained quiet, due to the absence of Baba Ram Chandra. On the other hand the land aristocracy crushed the well organized kisan movement with the helping hand of the government. The taluqdar karindas, assisted by the police prepared a reign of terror, houses were burnt, women molested, beatings and abuses hurt on the tenants and their property was looted. In Pratapgarh 65 cases agains 307 persons were instituted and 50 of them were related to kisan sabhas.68 In April, 1920 Moti Lal Nehru as the president of the U.P. Kisan Sabha issued a leaflet “Kisano Ko Sandesh” (message to peasants). This message also emphasized on the need of non-cooperation, Gandhian method, to refrain from meeting. The young men who distributed the leaflet messages were arrested on 28 April for distributing “seditious material”. The young men were prosecuted but the author of the leaflet; Moti Lal Nehru was not touched. Krishna Kant Malviya attacked the government for imprisoning the young men. He added; was it the policy of the government to prosecute small fries only so that the people should not follow their leaders.69 The peasant movement made entry into the Lucknow district also. The tenants of Salempur refused to pay illegal cesses to the taluqdar; who retaliated by prohibiting the tenants from grazing cattle on the village grazing lands. This lighted the fire and on 9th July about 200
armed sepoys of the Raja of Salempur entered Bareha village at about 8 pm and plundered the village. The tenants were forced to pay nazarana, arrears of rent and illegal cesses etc. Two peasants were killed and twenty one were injured in this case.\(^7\) District congress committee members of Lucknow had come to enquire into the matter. Lack of co-ordination amongst the peasants, the repressive policy of the government and the efforts of the congressmen led to the shifting of the peasant movement to the urban intelligentsia. The movement which had made the taluqadors. Sleepless nights now stood shattered. Baba Ram Chandra attributed this to the acts of the vakils (advocates) and the urban leaders. He went to the extent of writing at a later date;

"The literate persons (urban leaders may either may either have Swaraj or they may beg, their profession is only theft and decoity as they use the peasants for their own interests)"\(^7\) The government of united provinces had treated the Oudh kisan movement with usual contempt so long as it moved on strictly constitutional lines. Buttler came with a heavy hand upon all the entire peasant. The chief secretary to the government of the united provinces addressed the association of the taluqadors and proposed to bring special legislation to suspend ejectment proceedings by revision of the Oudh rent act.\(^7\) The body of the taluqadors wanted to punish the aggressors instead of appeasing them. The government had received various proposals for amending the Oudh Rent Act. The proposals to amend the Oudh Rent Act were sent to the British India Association. The object of this draft was to avoid the extension of right of occupancy and to avoid the introduction of the hereditary principle in any novel form in Oudh. After hectic activities and great perturbance, the Oudh Rent Act Amendment Bill was introduced
in the council the passage of the Oudh Rent Act of 1921 revealed that the bases of Faudalisms were to remain as in fact as ever rather they were strengthened in some respects. The peasant revolt of 1920-21 had been dealt with an iron hand by the British and had resulted in some amendments in the Oudh Rent Act to check peasant’s exploitation. The congress leadership did not want to encourage a turbulent peasantry and tried to demobilize the peasants.73 The Ahemdabad session (1920) of the congress took no notice to get the peasants behind it. Its attitude was anti government but pro-landlord. But the pro-landlord stance of the congress leadership could scarcely prevent the re-emergence of protest among the Oudh peasantry in the form of Aika. The Aika movement was started in Hardoi in 1921 its headquarter was at Malihabad in Lucknow district. The Aika (unity) was a revival of Kisan sabha and it seems the name was adopted to unite the peasants both Hindu and Muslims. The pioneer believed that it was started by Madari Pasi who had good relations with the non-cooperators and Khilafatists of Malihabad.74 In Sandila it was started by the Khilafatists of Malihabad. An intelligence report described this movement in Hardoi as largely spontaneous and not due to the efforts of outside agitators.75 The peasants took an oath not to pay more than the recorded rent; not to pay without obtaining receipts, not to begar in the absence of payment, use any water without giving any payment, to pay rent at Kharif and Rabi, and above all to preach Aika. Destruction of the land lord’s field was preached in Aika. The land lords were socially boycotted by washermen, barbers and sweepers and refusal of their services forced many landlords to abandon the villages.76 The tenantry was once again fighting under the Aika banner because the government could not check the illegal collections. The actual rents were concealed by the taluqdars and zamindars. No attempt was made to define legal or illegal
cesses. The land owing classes in Hardoi were seriously alarmed by the Eka movement. On 28 December, 1921, the peasants of Malehra village under police circle Sandila, surrounded the house of the zilledar. The protest was for illegal collection of rent and 500 peasants were there but the revolt was crushed by estate sepoys. A riot took place in Sandila also against the strong zamindari tendencies.

Deputy Commissioner of Hardoi reported that zamindars were forcing him to take proceedings at once against the leaders of the kisans. Madari Pasi grew as the most influential peasant leader. His headquarter was Mohenganj, which he renamed Mohankar. He made liberal grants of land at 4 annas a head. Madari’s style of agitation and working against taluqdars and government was similar to that of Suraj Prasad’s during the Kisan Sabha Movement. Madari was addressing the meetings. He addressed meetings in Kesrawal and Bharawan villages and soon the servants of Bharawan estate were assaulted while collecting rents. An agrarian rent riot was also reported from Atrauli on 18th January 1922. The Eka movement spread with amazing rapidity in Sandila tehsil. During this time non-payment of rent and revenue was being discussed in several districts of United Provinces. Madari was also using the traditional symbols of the region for mobilizing the peasants. Devotional religious text like the Gita, the Koran and the holy scriptures of Katha were used by Madari for this purpose. Madari’s movement was a challenge for the administration and the land lords. He organized twenty one meetings in which 2000 peasants attended in three days. Landlords were forced to apologise for their acts and oppressive measures. Almost every day demonstrations were held by the aikawalas (members of Aika) and landlords were threatened.
Meanwhile aika between tenants and zamindars was also preached by some leaders who visited Atrauli; and tried to sort out local differences and advised the zamindars to join the movement. The peasants refused to act on the advice of the non-cooperators, regarding their relations with zamindars; as they now felt themselves capable of settling their own affairs. In February thirty more villages were united and no barbar at Sandila was allowed to share the sub-divisional magistrate. Even the peasants appointed their own officials. Congressmen were failed to control the aikawalas movement which spread rapidly. Oudh Kisan Conference Condemned the Aika movement and Moti Lal Nehru stressed to cease these activities; so as to attain Swaraj; unity between peasants and zamindars would lead to Swarj and assist the peasants more effectively. Moti Lal appealed the people to vote for congress and khilafat worker in district board elections. All the urban leaders tried to condemn the Aika movement. On the other hand pro-landlord organizations were working in favour of land lords. Hardoi constitutional league (a body of advocates and zamindar) discussed the situation arising out of Aika on 22 February 1922. The league attributed the origin of Aika to the efforts of bad characters and irresponsible persons and declared its inability work for Aman Sabha in the disturbed states of affairs. The Hardoi zamindars met on 25th February at Sandila and urged the government to protect them from “bad characters” (the aikawalas) and decided to form civil guards for self-protection. The leaders of the movement had begun to assume the title of Raja and were moving in the country side with large body guards of archer and spearman. The Pratap wrote “under the shower of bullets the helpless kisans are being made to believe that by organizing themselves for self-defence they are committing a great sin and while the taluqdar of talukdars (Butler) is protecting the peace
of the country and his beloved taluqdars there is none for the poor peasants.” The authorities could not arrest the Madari. Good arrangements were done to arrest him but the news of the intended arrest leaked out and Madari fled away from the place.

A reward of Rs. 1,000 was offered for his arrest and again the government employed select police force to affect his arrest in Hardoi and other districts where he had his hiding places. Even the question of Madari’s arrest was raised in legislative council by Thakur Mashal Singh, who was the leader of Hardoi Zamindars. The Home Minister had to assure him the Madari’s arrest. Despite the great efforts of police Madari was not arrested. He made himself underground and later joined the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army till 1928 and remained a rebel with them. In Madari’s absence the movement was led by Deo Pasi whom the officials described as “an imitator of Madari”. Some patwaris and chowkidars had also joined the movement and the movement was looked upon an instrument of oppression against the land owning classes. In village Udaipur of district Hardoi the police shot two peasants on 9th March 1922 when a riot broke out. A sub-Inspector, a police man and two chowkidars were making enquiries about the Aika after sunset. All of sudden a roof of a hut was seen to be in flames and 100 pasis rushed upon the police shouting to kill them, they were armed with lathies and police had to fire 6 rounds. The police recovered two corpses of the ring leaders on the morning of 10 March. The Deputy Commissioner said at was an attempt to burn and murder police party and justified the firing.
A special magistrate would try hundreds of peasants together and the trial used to be over in five minutes. The intelligence record admits conviction of 59 persons in Hardoi by 8th April, 1922. In Bahraich it was a common belief that Gandhiji would lower the cash rents. Large number of tenants moved from village to village demanding abolition of grain rents. In one village two Thekedars were beaten by tenants and the grain was carried off. The tenants resorted to popular measures to check their exploitation and incidents of grain lifting were reported the situation forced butler, who was very much against the conversion of grain rents into cash rents to depute officials for directing the conversion of rents. A tenants, Mohammed Baksh who incited the tenants to remove their crops and prevented the zamindar from realizing rents by batai; was asked to furnish a personal bond of Rs. 500 and two sureties. Many tenants removed their crops.

The peasantry of Sitapur had also joined the Aika. The movement started by Madari Pasi had now began to felt in Sitapur. A group of villages around Kunwarpur police station Shiduali showed signs of anti-zamindar unrest. In 14 villages of Mohsoi police station circle the tenants refused to pay perquisites to their zamindars. The intelligence report held the Aika movement responsible for agrarian unrest in Sitapur. On 1 April Sheo Prasad Brahman, a Mukkaddam of the Raja of the Mehmumadabad was murdered in Ilahipur by Ram Asre Kurmi a tenant cultivator. Sheo Prasad had actually declared Ram Asre as bad character. The criterion for it was his inability to pay rents. Ram Asre resisted entering his name as bad character. And in the course of argument Ram Asre aimed his lathi at Sheo Prasad; after struggle Sheo Prasad got injuries from a banka (kind of sickle). Sheo Prasad died after 12 hours. Ram Asre was arrested and tried. The Session Judge
sentenced him death which was reduced to six years imprisonment on an appeal. So, this was the example of the peasants protest against land lord’s agents at individual level peasants had set up their own administration. The peasants appointed a Deputy Commissioner, a judge and other officials. At Mohali village crops of land lord’s were destroyed. As a result to display the night of the “Raj” a column of troops was marched in Sitapur. The court of wards let loose a reign of terror in the district.

The details of the oppression were mentioned in a report when J.L. Nehru and Mohan Lal Sexena visited Sitapur district on behalf of provincial congress committee. They toured 9 villages and recounted the plunder and the barbarians methods practiced by the court of ward employees, a few policemen and number of hooligans and bad characters of the district. Dunne, the special manager of the court of wards, who had reputation of a very oppressive manager, threatened the villagers at Kauraiya, while the raiders broke open the houses, and went on looting. Those who resisted were repeatedly ducked in a pond.” In other villages looting of houses, public beating, extortion of the money in the form of fines and molestation of women was practiced. The report of Nehru reveals the truth that even the Martial law could not have made such worse conditions. The congress report on terrorism does not mention even once oppression on the part of zamindars or taluqdars whereas ¾ of the area covered by the congressmen was either zamindari or taluqdari and ¼ under the court of wards. Zamindari reference of oppression was avoided because most of the office bearers of the D.C.C. were zamindars. According to the press report local people warned Jawahar Lal Nehru that they would not tolerate his interference. On the other hand government denied any terrorism in Sitapur district.
The Aika movement spread in other districts through it became of popular in Hardoi and Sitapur. The Deputy Commissioner of Barabanki denied any presence of Aika in his district in the second week of March and applauded leading taluqdar and zamindars for offering their assistance to the government in realisation of revenue. However the Deputy Commissioner did not mention murder of a zamindar’s peon. The motive behind the murder was hostility to tenants regarding collection of rents. On 8th April Garib Das Pasi became a sadhu and preached Aika. Soon he was assaulted by a zamindar. In Pratapgarh in January 1922 the agents who were collecting rents were beaten by the peasants. In February, the Fyzabad villages were grouped together in the Panchayats and preached Aika to each other. The local leaders were once again voicing agrarian grievances. Navrang Singh of Mujahidpur spoke on the unity among tenants at Tanda tehsil. On 13th February Gaya Prasad Singh of village Prithvipur spoke of the same.

Once again Noor Mohammad of Tanda and Mohadeo Brahman of Kathehari also stressed unity. Mahabir Prasad of village Behrampur spoke against nazarana and begar. By March Unao district had also been affected by Aika Movement. Ambika Prasad of Auras village spoke of Aika Movement. But the movement here did not gain much strength, much to the relief of local congressmen. As the movement slackened congressmen gained in confidence. At Lucknow, on 10th June when one Hari Barahman complained about eviction from his holding at a congress meeting a number of persons in the audience are said to have openly scoffed at the allegations. And by the end of the year Moti Lal Nehru could say that “we should go and organize in villages but the government won’t let us do that so, we should work for council entry.
The Aika movement died down owing to the many reasons. The police tried their level best to save the land lords. After non-cooperation the government had sufficient armed police which was used to suppress the movement and peasants were arrested. Due to political considerations the might of the British Raj stood behind the land lords who were well prepared with their bands of armed retainers to meet the challenge to their authority. The attitude of the congress leadership towards the Aika proved inspiring for the land lords and the British to deal severly with the Aikawalas. Butler maintained a studied silence and avoided any comment on the grievances of peasants. The congress leadership not only tried to prevent the peasantry from taking to direct forms of actions but openly preached against the movement. On the other hand the movement motivated the peasantry to talk about the major problems and demands of peasants. The peasant not only revolted against the land lords but also resisted against the government. It was an improved movement of the common peasants as compared to earlier movements though it covered a limited area confined to Oudh only; but almost covered all the immediate problems of the peasants. The movement was so popular among the peasants that it could not have central authority to direct and guide the various aikas that had come up. All the leaders either went underground or were arrested which sometime became a weakness. The excitement aroused by it was slightly premature. Faunthorpe compared the movement with a disturbance made in a pool of water and the resulting ripples spread in all directions with rapidity but subsided very quickly.

So, the peasant movement in Oudh was the result of feudal oppression practiced in a colonial set-up by the taluqdars with a support of an imperial
government. The taluqdars were recognized by the British Government as a vital part or means of upholding the economic and political structure of imperial rule. Their powers were allowed to grow manifold and they became an imperium with an imperio.\textsuperscript{102} The taluqdars emerged as a bastion for the consolidation and stability of the British Empire. Their profit lust led the reduced the peasantry to the status of tenantry and further, of landless agricultural labourers. And whenever the peasants raised voice, the taluqdars, through their organization, the British India Association of Oudh; rendered all the possible help to Curb such Activities. The taluqdars also used their collective strength to protect and broaden their newly acquired rights. Thus the peasant movement of Awadh came to a end with suppression; but the movement prepared the peasantry to fight and raise for their rights. It can not be said that movements of the peasantry were the part of non-cooperation movement; it were occurred due to the feudal oppression and the target of the peasantry were zamindars.

Though the demands of the peasantry were related with the end of exploitation of zamindars and tenants; but the rebellious impulse of the peasantry could not attain radical changes in the agrarian structure. After 1922 movement there were no significant progress in the peasant movements for 6-7 years and the only organized movement of the peasantry was no-rent campaign in 1930 which was led by Indian National Congress.
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