

RESISTING COLONIAL RULE: THE ROLE OF KANIKA PEASANTS IN THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

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Abstract

This study examines the participation of peasants in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Kanika Estate of coastal Odisha during 1930–1934. It argues that peasant mobilisation emerged from the interaction of longstanding agrarian grievances, including excessive taxation, forced labour, restrictions on customary rights, and economic distress, with the wider nationalist movement. The study traces the organisational development of resistance from the earlier peasant movements of 1906–1922 through the establishment of the Swaraj Ashram and the expansion of Congress activities before 1930. It particularly examines salt satyagraha, the no-tax campaign, anti-liquor picketing, khadi promotion, volunteer mobilisation, and the participation of students and children. Drawing on archival records, official reports, contemporary newspapers, secondary works, and oral testimonies, the study demonstrates that Kanika's peasants transformed local socio-economic grievances into a broader form of anti-colonial and anti-feudal resistance. The study highlights the significance of rural communities and local leadership in extending the freedom movement beyond major political centres.

Keywords: Kanika Estate; Peasant Movement; Civil Disobedience Movement; Salt Satyagraha; Agrarian Resistance; Anti-Colonial Movement; Anti-Feudal Resistance; Odisha.

Geographical and Historical Background of Kanika

Kanika, situated along the Bay of Bengal in present-day Kendrapada district of Odisha, occupied an important strategic and economic position during the colonial period. The region was characterised by fertile alluvial plains, an extensive network of rivers and canals, forests, and coastal resources, which contributed to the development of Kanika as a prosperous agrarian estate. Agriculture constituted the principal basis of the local economy, with rice cultivation serving as the major occupation of the peasantry. Its coastal location and access to waterways also facilitated communication and trade, thereby enhancing the regional significance of the estate.

Historically, Kanika was one of the prominent feudatory estates of Odisha. Although its rulers acknowledged the suzerainty of the Gajapati Kings of Puri, they exercised considerable autonomy in matters of internal administration. The estate was ruled successively by members of the Bhanja dynasty and was administratively divided into four major regions: Panchamukha, Chhamukha, Kerada, and Kaladwip. These administrative divisions were significant not only for the governance of the estate but also for the subsequent development and geographical spread of peasant mobilisation during the twentieth century. A major turning point in the history of Kanika occurred in 1803, when the British conquered Odisha. While most of the princely states accepted British authority, Kanika initially resisted British expansion. Following a surprise military attack by the Commissioner of Cuttack, Raja Balabhadra Bhanja was compelled to sign a treaty of submission on 22 November 1803. This brought Kanika under British authority and marked the beginning of a new phase in the political history of the estate. Following British occupation, the zamindari system was introduced, and Kanika became a princely estate operating under indirect colonial administration. The Raja retained considerable internal authority, but his position remained subject to British supervision. The estate administration was

responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting revenue, and demonstrating political loyalty to the colonial government. Between 1803 and 1947, seven rulers governed the estate. Among them, Raja Rajendra Narayana Bhanjdeo (1902–1948) had the longest reign. His administration was also characterised by heavy taxation, forced levies, and strict revenue collection. These policies imposed a considerable burden upon the peasantry and contributed to growing dissatisfaction within rural society.

Methodology

This study adopts a historical and analytical methodology to examine peasant participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Kanika Estate during 1930–1934. It draws primarily on primary sources, including official government proceedings, administrative reports, contemporary newspapers, archival records, and oral-history interviews with local historians, activists, and informed residents. Relevant secondary sources, including books, research works, and historical studies on Kanika and Odisha's freedom movement, have been used to contextualise and corroborate the evidence. The study follows a chronological and thematic approach, analysing the interaction between agrarian grievances, local political mobilisation, nationalist influence, and administrative repression. Oral testimonies have been critically compared with documentary evidence to identify continuities, local experiences, and differing perspectives. Through this combined approach, the study seeks to situate the Kanika peasant movement within the broader history of Odisha's anti-colonial and anti-feudal resistance.

Research Questions of the Study

The history of the Indian freedom movement is therefore incomplete without recognising the vital role played by peasants in sustaining and expanding the struggle against colonial rule.

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

How did the peasants of Kanika Estate participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement between 1930 and 1934?

What socio-economic and political factors motivated their involvement in the movement?

How did the Kanika Estate administration and the colonial government respond to peasant mobilisation and acts of civil disobedience?

Development of the Movement, 1906–1922

The peasant resistance that developed in Kanika between 1906 and 1922 created an important political and organisational foundation for subsequent rural mobilisation during the nationalist period. The first organised protest in 1906 emerged in response to oppressive revenue policies, restrictions on customary rights, and the introduction of unpopular administrative measures. Under the leadership of Dinabandhu Khandayat Ray and other local leaders, the peasants demonstrated the effectiveness of collective action against estate authority. Although the movement resulted in only limited immediate concessions, it strengthened rural solidarity, encouraged political awareness, and weakened the unquestioned legitimacy of the estate administration. During the years following the initial protest, continued economic hardship, repeated natural calamities, heavy taxation, and administrative coercion sustained agrarian discontent. The larger movement of 1922 expanded peasant participation, attracted provincial attention, and established stronger connections between local agrarian grievances and the wider Indian nationalist movement.

The experience of resistance between 1906 and 1922 therefore transformed scattered rural protests into an increasingly organised political tradition. This earlier phase provided the political experience, collective consciousness, and organisational basis that later facilitated participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement and other phases of India's freedom struggle.

Development of the Movement, 1923–1930

An important local development in the growth of political awareness was the establishment of the Swaraj Ashram at Narendrapur in 1924. Under the leadership of Chakradhar Behera and other local activists, the Ashram developed into an organisational centre of the peasant movement. The Ashram conducted village

meetings, awareness campaigns, and constructive programmes intended to promote unity, self-reliance, and non-violent resistance. By establishing a network of local leaders across Panchamukha, it contributed to the preparation of the peasantry for collective participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement when Gandhi launched the nationwide campaign in 1930. The influence of the Indian National Congress played an important role in connecting the local grievances of Kanika with the wider nationalist struggle. During Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Odisha in 1927, Chakradhar Behera and other Kanika leaders presented the problems faced by the peasants before him. Gandhi advised them to continue their struggle through peaceful and lawful methods.

Congress leaders such as Harekrushna Mahatab and Gopabandhu Das maintained close contact with the Kanika movement. Their interaction with local activists encouraged political awareness and strengthened the confidence of the peasantry. These contacts helped the peasants to understand their local struggle against feudal oppression as part of the broader movement for India's freedom. The Lahore Congress Resolution of 1929 provided another important stimulus to peasant participation. The declaration of Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence) and the decision to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement generated among the Kanika peasants the expectation that both British colonial authority and the autocratic administration of the Kanika Raja could be challenged. The resolutions were disseminated through Congress workers and the Swaraj Ashram, thereby increasing political consciousness and encouraging peasants to challenge unjust taxation and arbitrary authority.

The Utkal Provincial Congress Committee, recognising the symbolic and economic importance of salt, decided to participate in Gandhi's movement. At a meeting held on 16th March 1930 in Balasore, the Committee resolved to initiate civil disobedience in Odisha by breaking the salt laws. Gopabandhu Choudhury was appointed to lead the movement. Congress leaders such as H.K. Mahatab and Sardar Surendranath Das played important roles in preparing the ground for agitation at Inchudi, a village on the Balasore coast that became a key site of salt satyagraha in Odisha.

Civil Disobedience Movement and Kanika, 1930

The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–1934) constituted one of the significant phases of India's struggle for independence. Mahatma Gandhi launched the movement on 12 March 1930 through the famous Salt March (Dandi March) to challenge the British monopoly over salt. The movement encouraged Indians to openly and peacefully violate unjust colonial laws through measures such as refusal to pay certain taxes, boycott of foreign goods, and promotion of indigenous products. It spread rapidly across the country and attracted peasants, workers, students, women, and political activists. Although the British government responded through arrests and repression, the movement strengthened nationalist consciousness and demonstrated the potential of non-violent mass resistance. With brief interruptions, it remained active until its formal withdrawal in 1934.

In Kanika, the national movement intersected with long-standing local agrarian grievances. The tenants found themselves engaged in a dual struggle against British colonial authority and the feudal authority of the Raja of Kanika. This combination of anti-colonial nationalism and anti-feudal agrarian resistance gave the Kanika movement a distinctive character within Odisha's freedom struggle. A key figure in this mobilisation was Chakradhar Behera, a respected peasant leader who travelled from village to village to mobilise farmers and gather support for the movement. He educated the rural population about their rights and encouraged non-cooperation with the authorities. By 1930, the local resistance had reached an important stage, as the national call for civil disobedience provided a wider political framework within which the peasants could express their existing grievances. The declaration of January 26th as Independence Day by the Indian National Congress further strengthened this political consciousness. The symbolic demand for complete sovereignty resonated strongly in Kanika, where tenants increasingly understood their local struggle as part of the broader Indian movement for independence.

Causes of Participation of the Kanika Peasants in the Civil Disobedience Movement

The participation of the Kanika peasants in the Civil Disobedience Movement during 1930–1932 was influenced by both the national call of Mahatma Gandhi and a series of long-standing local grievances. Years of excessive land revenue, illegal cesses, forced labour or Bethi, arbitrary enhancement of rent, and denial of customary rights had generated widespread dissatisfaction.

The estate administration restricted access to forests and prohibited the use of Gochar or common grazing land. Such restrictions deprived cultivators of resources essential for agriculture and livestock and directly affected the economic survival of the rural population. Consequently, the national movement provided an opportunity through which these local socio-economic grievances could be articulated and challenged.

Natural calamities intensified the difficulties faced by the peasantry. The devastating floods of 1926–1927 destroyed crops, livestock, and houses and pushed many cultivators into famine and severe financial distress. Instead of granting rent remission or relief, the Raja insisted upon the collection of land revenue and carried unpaid rent forward as arrears for the following year.

This rigid revenue policy contributed to indebtedness and reinforced the perception among peasants that the estate administration remained indifferent to their economic suffering. The Civil Disobedience Movement therefore appeared to provide an opportunity to challenge both colonial authority and the exploitative policies of the Kanika Raja.

The establishment of the Swaraj Ashram at Narendrapur in 1924 was another important factor. Under Chakradhar Behera and other local activists, the Ashram functioned as an organisational centre for meetings, awareness campaigns, and constructive programmes. Its activities promoted unity, self-reliance, and non-violent resistance while creating links among local leaders.

The Congress organisation further connected Kanika's local grievances with the wider nationalist struggle. The interaction between Kanika leaders and national and provincial Congress figures helped strengthen political awareness among the peasants.

The Lahore Congress Resolution of 1929, particularly the declaration of Purna Swaraj, provided an additional ideological stimulus. The Kanika peasants increasingly understood their struggle against local feudal authority within the wider context of India's demand for independence.

Thus, local socio-economic grievances and nationalist political consciousness interacted to produce a distinctive form of participation in Kanika. The movement was not simply an external response to Gandhi's call; rather, the national campaign provided an additional political framework for grievances that had developed over a much longer period.

Salt Satyagraha and Local Resistance

Salt production had historically been an important local activity in coastal Odisha, particularly because of the region's long coastline and natural saline fields. With the establishment of British authority, however, strict regulations were imposed on salt production and heavy taxes were levied, adversely affecting traditional local manufacture and trade.

The importance of salt became particularly evident during the Salt Satyagraha of 1930. Inspired by Acharya Harihar Das's Salt Satyagraha at Inchudi, the Kanika peasants selected Karanjamala as their own centre for salt manufacturing. Thousands of people marched towards the seashore, demonstrating their participation in the national campaign.

Before the proposed salt production could take place, however, the Raja informed the British authorities. British officials, together with estate officials and armed retainers, intervened and blocked the programme. The police occupied Karanjamala and surrounded Panchutikiri. Villages were searched, peasant property was looted, and important leaders including Chakradhar Behera and Santha Charan Behera were arrested. Police camps were also established as part of the effort to suppress the movement.

These measures did not eliminate peasant resistance. Instead, repression intensified resentment and strengthened the determination of the participants.

Kherang and the Revival of Salt Production

Parts of the Kanika estate fell within Balasore district, and this geographical connection brought the region into direct contact with the Civil Disobedience Movement. Kanika possessed its own salt fields and a tradition of salt production, particularly in coastal villages such as Kherang.

The people of Kanika were already dissatisfied with restrictions upon their traditional rights. Gandhi's call to break the salt laws therefore provided a moral and political justification for reclaiming these customary economic activities. One of the first areas to respond was Panchamukha, located in the Balasore portion of the estate. Villagers participated enthusiastically and manufactured salt in defiance of colonial regulations. In

Kherang, salt production was resumed under the leadership of local satyagrahis despite the possibility of police intervention.

Among the prominent participants was Santha Charan Behera of Kanika, who was arrested for his involvement in the salt satyagraha. Bhagaban Dixit also participated in the protest at Iram. During the demonstration, he sustained a severe injury to his right leg after being struck by police batons, illustrating the repressive character of the response to the peaceful agitation.

Repression and Resistance in Karanjmal

Following the successful satyagraha at Kherang, Karanjmal, located six miles from Punchutikri, was selected as another centre of resistance. As the movement expanded, the Raja of Kanika responded through coercive measures rather than negotiation. Armed men were deployed across the various kutcheries or revenue offices of the estate. At the centre of the repressive operation was Radha Shyam Dash, an officer in the service of the Raja. Known for his ruthlessness, Dash was stationed at Karanjmal to suppress the growing resistance.

The repressive actions led to the displacement of approximately 200 men, women, and children from Karanjmal. Fearing violence and looting, they were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. Their houses and property were subsequently looted by the Raja's men. Despite these developments, the inhabitants of Karanjmal and neighbouring villages continued to resist.

The conflict reached a further stage on 1st December 1930, two days after Radha Shyam Dash had reportedly signalled his intention to deal with the tenants of Panchutikri through severe physical punishment. A group of approximately 100-to-150-armed goons, reportedly hired from Bhadrak and transported by motor launches, entered Panchutikri in an attempt to terrorise the tenants into submission.

The villagers, caught without adequate preparation or arms, were compelled to flee. Many escaped into nearby paddy fields and raised alarms to alert neighbouring settlements. In response, peasants from surrounding villages rushed to assist them. However, lacking weapons and organised defensive arrangements, they were eventually forced to retreat. In a moment that demonstrated both desperation and courage, the villagers gathered bones from a nearby burial ground together with bamboos and used them to resist the attackers. They hurled bones towards the advancing men, creating confusion and fear that eventually contributed to the retreat of the attackers. Several villagers were injured during the confrontation, including Madhu Padhi, Parikhit Pallai, and Madhu Behera, who sustained serious wounds. Women and children fled into the surrounding jungles for safety because of their fear of both the Raja's men and the police. According to the supplied historical account, the subsequent narrative was presented in favour of the estate administration. The Raja claimed that his men had been attacked by unruly tenants while they were merely travelling towards the paddy fields. The colonial police, which frequently supported princely authority, sided with the Raja.

Following the confrontation, criminal cases were instituted against several tenants who had participated in the resistance. Eighteen individuals received prison sentences ranging from six to eighteen months. These punitive measures further intensified fear and insecurity among the peasant population. Nevertheless, the repression did not eliminate the spirit of resistance. The experiences at Karanjmal and Panchutikri demonstrated both the severity of feudal coercion and the capacity of ordinary peasants to organise collectively in defence of their interests.

No-Tax Campaign and Arrest of Chakradhar Behera

Following the crackdown, Chakradhar Behera continued his activities underground and assumed a leading role in the "no tax" campaign. He urged peasants not to pay rent or revenue to either the Raja or the British authorities. The campaign directly challenged both colonial and feudal authority and sought to strengthen the economic autonomy of the peasantry. Behera also worked to support families affected by the repression. He collected rice and vegetables from sympathetic villagers and arranged for these supplies to be distributed among families of arrested or injured participants.

His growing influence made him an important target of the authorities. On 29th June 1930, Chakradhar Behera was arrested by the British authorities for his role in the no-tax campaign. His arrest represented a major setback for the movement but simultaneously demonstrated the significance that the Kanika agitation had acquired within the wider national struggle. As the Civil Disobedience Movement spread across India in 1930, the movement in Kanika gradually extended beyond salt production. The salt satyagraha was disrupted by

heavy monsoon rains, but the interruption did not end local mobilisation. Instead, local leaders and participants adapted their methods and adopted other Gandhian programmes.

These included picketing in front of excise and liquor shops, boycotting foreign cloth, promoting khadi, and forming village panchayats. These activities corresponded with the objectives of the Indian National Congress while also providing local communities with practical means of expressing economic self-reliance and political resistance. Picketing liquor shops had particular significance because it challenged British revenue interests as well as social problems associated with alcohol consumption.

Students and young people constituted an important component of the local movement. School and college students participated in protests, marches, volunteer activities, and other forms of nationalist mobilisation. Their involvement demonstrated that the movement had extended beyond adult peasant participants. Younger children participated through the organisation known as the Banar Sena, or the “Monkey Troop”, a name inspired by the mythological army of Hanuman from the *Ramayana*. Members of the Banar Sena undertook a variety of organisational and logistical responsibilities.

They carried Congress bulletins styled as bicycle newspapers, delivered letters, hoisted the national flag, cooked food for volunteers, pasted posters on public walls, and distributed pamphlets. Their mobility enabled them to undertake tasks in circumstances of close surveillance and contributed to the functioning of the wider movement. School children from Kanika, particularly from the Kerara area, participated actively in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Panchanan Rout of Gopalpur village, a student of Pattamundai M.E. School, left his studies after being influenced by speeches delivered by national leaders Malati Devi and Rama Devi during a rally at Pattamundai Bazar. He subsequently participated in the satyagraha at Kujang and was arrested. Later, Panchanan played an important role in mobilising volunteers under the guidance of Shri Sarat Das, a senior Congress worker. Another important young activist was Kinu Charan Rout of Gopalpur, who participated in picketing liquor shops at Rajnagar and Kendrapara. Like Panchanan, Kinu was arrested and imprisoned in Cuttack and Patna jails. Meanwhile, Bhagaban Dixit of Panchamuka extended his activities to Balasore, where he led picketing campaigns at excise and liquor shops. Panchanan Rout was also influenced by his teacher, Sri Chintamani Das, a school teacher at Gopalpur and an early organiser of the Congress movement in the Kerara area of Kanika. Chintamani Das used his position as an educator to encourage political awareness among his students and inspire them to participate in the freedom struggle. Under his influence, several young volunteers became prominent in the regional movement. Among them were Panchanan Rout and Bharat Rout of Gopalpur, Chintamani Rout of Padini, and Dhaneswar Sahani of Nuagan. Their participation helped sustain nationalist activity in the region and strengthened the connection between local youth and the wider movement for Indian independence.

The failure of the Round Table Conference in London in 1931 to produce meaningful progress towards Indian self-rule contributed to the decision to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement. In preparation for renewed agitation, volunteer training camps known as Sevadal centres were established in different parts of Odisha. In the Kendrapara sub-division, an important Sevadal training camp was established at Mirpatna in 1931. The centre trained young volunteers in non-violent resistance, self-discipline, and community leadership. From the Kerara area of Kanika, Kinu Charan Rout, Jashobanta Sethi, and Bidyadhar Das participated in the Mirpatna training camp. These centres helped prepare organised cadres for subsequent regional mobilisation.

Second Phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement

With the beginning of the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the training centres were closed and trained volunteers were directed towards active participation in the struggle. The colonial authorities responded with increased repression, including arrests of leaders and raids on villages. Despite these measures, resistance continued. Congress leaders such as Surendranath Patnaik began organising new volunteer groups from Kanika, Aul, Kujanga, and Tirtol. The response from the local population was immediate and substantial. The Kerara village of Kanika became an especially important centre of volunteer mobilisation. When called upon, many people from this *elaka* or region joined the movement spontaneously. Volunteers were organised into batches under designated leaders.

The first group of volunteers from Kerara proceeded under the leadership of Bharat Rout of Gopalpur. It included participants from several villages who had already demonstrated their commitment through earlier acts of resistance. The group included Dhaneswar Sahani of Nuagan, Krushna Chandra Pradhan and Kanduri Sethi of Nachhipara, Padma Charan Jena of Gopalpur, Chunta Swain and Kanhu Charan Swain of Hriharpur, and Upendra Jena of Kathapangara.

Their activities extended beyond direct civil disobedience. They organised local protests, led processions, distributed khadi, and educated villagers about their rights. Their objective was both to sustain civil disobedience and to strengthen the foundations of self-governance and national consciousness in rural Odisha. many of these volunteers were arrested, harassed, and beaten. Nevertheless, their determination remained strong. young volunteers from the Kerara region also faced direct repression while picketing excise and liquor shops at Choudhury Bazar, Cuttack. The first group involved in this phase was arrested while protesting and was subsequently imprisoned in Cuttack and Sambalpur jails.

Soon afterwards, a second group of volunteers led by Panchanan Rout of Gopalpur travelled from Kerara towards Cuttack. The members included Keshab Bhuyan, Satrugan Patra, Nishamani Bal, and Paramananda Biswal. Demonstrating their commitment to the movement, they travelled on foot from Kerara to Indupur, where they obtained temporary shelter at the house of Natabar Jagdeb, a sympathiser of the movement. From Indupur, they were guided by Trailokya Nath Das, an experienced activist, who assisted them in reaching Cuttack. After arriving in Cuttack, the volunteers participated in picketing outside excise and liquor shops. The authorities responded by arresting all members of the group and imprisoning them. Their actions reflected the determination of Kanika's volunteers to sacrifice personal freedom in pursuit of national liberation. Another important participant was Bidyadhar Das of Kerara, who had previously been stationed at the Mirpatna Swaraj Ashram, a centre of nationalist activity and volunteer training. Bidyadhar Das and a group of fellow volunteers subsequently proceeded from Mirpatna to Cuttack, where they participated in anti-liquor picketing and were arrested. The Ashram itself became an important contested space because of its symbolic and organisational significance within the nationalist movement.

During the confrontation, Upendra Jena of the Kerara area was severely injured while participating in efforts to reclaim the Ashram as a centre of nationalist activity. Similarly, Kinu Charan Rout of Gopalpur, who had already become known through his earlier participation, took part in the action and was wounded during the confrontation.

Repression, Arrests and Sacrifice

The second phase of the movement did not necessarily acquire the same public visibility as the earlier salt satyagraha, but it was marked by substantial participation, repression, arrests, and injuries. The colonial authorities viewed sustained rural mobilisation as a threat and responded through measures intended to suppress the movement rapidly.

The arrests, imprisonments, and injuries experienced during this phase demonstrated the intensity of the struggle. yet repression failed to completely extinguish the movement because the agitation had acquired a broader social foundation.

The participation of villagers, peasants, students, women, and children demonstrated the wide social reach of the movement. what had initially centred on opposition to salt laws expanded into a broader struggle associated with justice, land rights, economic rights, dignity, and resistance to both colonial and feudal authority.

The Kanika movement cannot be understood solely as a protest against a particular colonial law. The revival of salt production represented an assertion of customary economic rights, while opposition to taxation and revenue demands reflected longstanding agrarian grievances.

Similarly, the organisation of village panchayats, promotion of khadi, boycott of foreign goods, anti-liquor picketing, volunteer mobilisation, and participation of students and children extended the movement beyond the immediate question of salt.

The experience of Kanika demonstrates how Gandhian methods were adapted to local circumstances. Nationalist programmes acquired regional meaning because they intersected with existing socio-economic conflicts and the experience of feudal authority.

The strength of the Kanika movement lay significantly in local leadership. Chakradhar Behera, Panchanan Rout, Kinu Charan Rout, Bidyadhar Das, Upendra Jena, and numerous other participants translated nationalist ideals into local action.

These leaders were not necessarily prominent figures at the national level, but their role in mobilising villages was important for sustaining the movement. Their activities demonstrated that the struggle for Indian independence was not confined to major political centres. It also unfolded through villages and smaller settlements where ordinary people participated in collective resistance.

The participation of members of the Banar Sena further demonstrated the multi-generational character of the movement. Children participated in distributing pamphlets, hoisting flags, and undertaking logistical responsibilities, thereby contributing to the broader organisational structure of the struggle.

Historical Significance of the Kanika Peasant Movement

The Kanika peasant movement occupies an important position in the history of Odisha's freedom struggle because it connected local agrarian grievances with the wider nationalist movement. The resistance was rooted in long-standing concerns relating to taxation, forced labour, customary rights, economic distress, and feudal authority, while the national movement provided an additional political and ideological framework.

The earlier resistance between 1906 and 1922 created a foundation of rural solidarity and political consciousness. The establishment of the Swaraj Ashram in 1924, the interaction with nationalist leaders during Gandhi's visit to Odisha in 1927, and the influence of the Lahore Congress Resolution of 1929 further strengthened this political development.

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930–1934 gave the peasants new opportunities for collective action. Salt production at Kherang and Karanjamala, resistance in Panchutikiri, the no-tax campaign, picketing of excise and liquor shops, promotion of khadi, formation of village panchayats, Seval training, and participation in volunteer groups represented different forms through which local grievances and nationalist objectives became interconnected.

The events at Karanjmal and Panchutikiri further demonstrate the complex nature of resistance in Kanika. The peasants confronted not only colonial authority but also the local structures of feudal power. Their experiences therefore illustrate the overlapping character of anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggles in a princely estate.

Conclusion

In this context, the Kanika peasant movement should not be viewed merely as an isolated episode of agrarian unrest. It represented a sustained process of rural political mobilisation in which economic grievances, customary rights, anti-feudal sentiments, and nationalist aspirations intersected. The participation of peasants, students, teachers, women, children, and local volunteers broadened the social base of resistance and strengthened the connection between Kanika and the wider freedom movement. The collective actions and sacrifices of the people of Kanika thus constitute a significant chapter in the history of popular resistance in Odisha and demonstrate the important role of rural society in the making of India's freedom struggle.

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