

The Legacy of Women's Participation in the Tebhaga Movement: Its Impact on Women's Empowerment and Rural Politics in West Bengal

Pulak Kumar Das¹ and Dr Nisha Sharma²

Scholar, History¹

Guide and Assistant Professor, History²

OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan.

Abstract: *The Tebhaga Movement (1946–1947) occupies a significant place in the agrarian history of Bengal as one of the most influential peasant struggles against the exploitative sharecropping system. While historians have extensively examined its economic and political dimensions, the role played by rural women has only recently gained scholarly attention. Women not only participated as supporters of the movement but also emerged as organisers, defenders of peasant communities, and political activists who challenged entrenched patriarchal norms. Their involvement transformed the movement into a broader social struggle that extended beyond demands for agrarian reform.*

This article examines the long-term legacy of women's participation in the Tebhaga Movement and evaluates its contribution to women's empowerment and rural politics in West Bengal. Using a socio-historical approach, the study argues that women's activism during the movement laid the foundation for their increased participation in local governance, peasant organizations, social movements, and community leadership after Independence. Although structural inequalities based on gender, caste, and class persisted, the Tebhaga experience significantly altered rural political culture by creating opportunities for women's collective action and leadership. The article concludes that the legacy of the Tebhaga Movement continues to influence contemporary rural women's organizations and democratic participation in West Bengal.

Keywords: Tebhaga Movement, Women, Empowerment, Rural Politics, Sharecroppers, Bengal, Peasant Movement, Gender.