

Social Movements – The ‘Legal MSP’ Revival

Syllabus Relevance: *Social Movements: Peasant Movements; Planning and Economic Development: Green Revolution.* **Context:** On Republic Day (Jan 26, 2026), the **Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM)** launched the "Farmers' Constitution March." Unlike the centralized Delhi siege of 2020, this was a decentralized mobilization across 15 states. **Key Theme:** *From 'Price Policy' to 'Right to Price'.* **Keywords:** *Statutory Guarantee, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), New Agrarianism, The 'Jat-Sikh' Consolidation, Green Revolution Fatigue.*

1. The Core Shift: Executive vs. Legislative

For 60 years (since the Green Revolution started in 1966), MSP was an **Executive Policy**. The government *could* declare it, but was not *legally bound* to buy at that price.

- **The Jan 2026 Demand:** The protests in January marked a doctrinal shift. Farmers are no longer asking for *higher* MSP (a fiscal demand); they are asking for a "**Legal Guarantee Act**" (a structural demand).
- **The Logic:** They want a law that makes purchasing below MSP a **criminal offense** for private traders. This attempts to insulate agriculture from "Market Forces" entirely, effectively turning MSP into a "Minimum Wage for Produce."

2. The Economic Trigger: The 'Wheat Crash' of 2026

Why now? The anger in January 2026 was fueled by the crash in global wheat prices.

- **The Context:** In late 2025, global wheat prices softened. To control domestic food inflation, the Centre used the **Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)** to dump grain stocks, suppressing market prices.
- **The Political Fallout:** Punjab/Haryana farmers realized that without a legal guarantee, the government would always prioritize "**Consumer Inflation**" (Urban Voters) over "**Producer Income**" (Rural Voters). The demand for a law is essentially a demand to strip the government of its power to manipulate prices for inflation control.

3. Theoretical Framework: 'New Agrarianism'

- **Class Character:** PSIR scholars note that this movement defies traditional Marxist categories. It is a **multi-class alliance**.
 - **Rich Peasants (Kulaks):** provide the tractors and resources.
 - **Small Peasants:** provide the foot soldiers.
 - **Landless Labourers:** (Often Dalits) have tentatively joined, fearing that if the farm economy collapses, their wages will vanish.
- **The 'Green Revolution' Trap:** The movement is strongest in the Green Revolution belt (Punjab, Haryana, West UP). This region is suffering from "**Technological Fatigue**" (stagnant yields) and "**Ecological Fatigue**" (falling water tables). The demand for Legal MSP is a desperate bid to maintain economic viability in a degrading ecosystem.

4. Political Impact: The Vacuum in Punjab

- **Decline of Akali Dal:** Historically, the **Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)** was the voice of the peasantry. Their decline (due to alliance with BJP during the 2020 farm laws) created a vacuum.
- **The Radicalization:** The Jan 2026 protests confirm that **Non-Political Unions** (like BKU-Ugrahan) have permanently replaced political parties as the primary representatives of the Jat-Sikh peasantry. This "Depoliticization of Representation" makes conflict resolution harder, as unions don't contest elections and thus cannot be co-opted easily.