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The Golden Revolution: Horticulture and Honey in India

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The Golden Revolution: Horticulture and Honey in India

The Green Revolution is remembered for wheat and rice. A quieter revolution changed India’s fruit bowl and honey jars. This article covers the Golden Revolution: its scope, its timeline, and the missions that followed.

At a Glance

Four facts to hold on to.

01
Golden Revolution

Horticulture, 1991–2003.

02
NHM

2005-06; 85:15 Centre–State.

03
MIDH

2014-15; subsumed six schemes.

04
Sweet Revolution

Honey mission, 2020-21 to 2025-26; ₹500 crore.

NHB National Horticulture Board, 1984.
MIDH Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture.
NBHM National Beekeeping and Honey Mission.

APEDAAgricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority.

Chapter 1: What the Golden Revolution Was

Must Know

Scope and timeline

- The Golden Revolution is India's horticulture growth period, from 1991 to 2003.
- It is one of several colour-named revolutions. See India's Agricultural Revolutions.
- It covers fruits, vegetables, flowers and spices, plus honey and beekeeping.
- Most other named revolutions cover only one sector.
- Dr. Nirpakh Tutej is credited as the "Father of the Golden Revolution".

What it achieved

- It made India the world's second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables.
- It also made India a world leader in crops such as mangoes and cashew nuts.

The earlier board

- The National Horticulture Board, founded in 1984, predates the Golden Revolution.
- It was set up on the recommendation of a committee headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan.
- See M.S. Swaminathan.

Remember: Golden = horticulture, 1991–2003. Silver = eggs and poultry. Sweet = honey.

> **Quick check 1.** The Golden Revolution is linked with egg production. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Chapter 2: The Missions That Followed

Good to Know

NHM and MIDH

- The National Horticulture Mission launched in 2005-06.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme, 85% funded by the Centre and 15% by states.
- The Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture launched in 2014-15.
- It subsumed NHM and five other schemes into one framework.
- The others were the Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States, the National Bamboo Mission and the NHB.
- The remaining two were the Coconut Development Board and the Central Institute for Horticulture, Nagaland.
- See National Bamboo Mission and Nagaland.

A governance pattern

- Folding six schemes into one reflects a wider pattern of 2014-15.
- NITI Aayog replaced the Planning Commission in the same year, for a similar reason: less fragmentation and overlap.
- See NITI Aayog and The Planning Commission of India.

Small area, big value

- Horticulture takes only about 14% of India's cropped area.
- Yet it gives more than 33% of agriculture's Gross Value Added.
- That is a much higher return per acre than staple grains.
- Horticulture output reached 3,777.76 lakh tonnes (about 377.78 million tonnes) in the Second Advance Estimates for 2025-26, released on 11 June 2026.

Golden vs Sweet

- Honey now has its own later scheme: the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission.
- It runs from 2020-21 to 2025-26 with a ₹500 crore outlay, branded the "Sweet Revolution".
- The Golden Revolution (1991–2003) is the broad horticulture period.
- The Sweet Revolution is a honey-only mission nearly two decades later.

Remember: NHB 1984 → Golden 1991–2003 → NHM 2005-06 → MIDH 2014-15 → NBHM 2020-21.

> **Quick check 2.** MIDH, launched in 2014-15, subsumed NHM and five other schemes. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Chapter 3: Why a Mixed Basket

Great to Know

Beyond grain

- The Golden Revolution used a mixed basket, unlike the Green Revolution's narrow grain focus.
- It targeted higher-value crops: fruits, vegetables and honey.
- The aim was to raise farmer incomes, not just national food-grain output.
- See also The Rainbow Revolution and Blue Revolution: Fisheries and Aquaculture.

> **Think it through: Think it through: why back fruit over grain?**
>
> An acre of grain feeds the country. An acre of fruit or flowers can pay the farmer far more. Grain solved hunger. Horticulture aimed at income.

Chapter 4: Past Papers

Exam Point of View

The pattern examiners keep testing

- Papers mismatch colour revolutions with the wrong sector.
- The favourite confusion is Golden (horticulture) with Silver (poultry and eggs).

CDS II 2023: Golden does not mean eggs

- The question gave four colour-revolution pairs: Pink with shrimp, Yellow with oilseeds, Black with biodiesel, and Golden with egg production.
- The first three pairs are right. The Golden pair is wrong.
- The answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3.
- (Source: CDS (II) 2023, Q99.)

UPSC Mains 2018: what did NHM do?

- A 15-mark question asked candidates to assess the National Horticulture Mission's role in boosting production, productivity and farmer income.
- (Source: UPSC CSM 2018, GS Paper III, Q13.)

> **Quick check 3.** The Silver Revolution relates to poultry and eggs. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Chapter 5: Current Affairs

Current Affairs

The Sweet Revolution's progress

- On 7 August 2026, a Rajya Sabha reply confirmed honey production nearly doubled in just over a decade.

- It rose from 80,530 tonnes in 2014-15 to 1,51,690 tonnes in 2025-26.
- New infrastructure includes 7 world-class honey testing labs, 66 mini adulteration-detection labs, 83 processing units and 81 Quality Nucleus Stock Development Centres for breeding queen bees. (Source: KrishiCode.)

Exports

- From 6 to 8 August 2026, APEDA organised BIOFACH INDIA 2026.
- It drew over 200 exhibitors and 35+ international buyers from 13 countries. (Source: PIB.)
- On 8 August 2026, APEDA facilitated the first commercial sea shipment of GI-tagged Mithila Makhana from Bihar to Australia.
- Bihar has 85% of national production, and growers realised about 18% higher returns. (Source: ANI.)
- On 22 July 2026, ICAR-CISH and APEDA validated a new sea-route protocol for mango exports.
- It gives a 25-day harvest-to-market transit from Amroha, Uttar Pradesh, to Dubai, with about 90% of the fruit arriving marketable.
- Sea freight costs far less than air, so exporters could pay farmers ₹15–20 per kg more. (Source: PIB.)

Relief for Totapuri mango growers

- Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced relief for Totapuri mango growers in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- It followed a high-level committee report on falling farm-gate prices.
- The committee recommended mandatory 22–25% real mango pulp in mango drinks, linked to GST rates.
- It proposed a 5% concessional rate for compliant drinks and higher rates for low-pulp products.

- It also recommended grafting higher-value varieties onto old orchards. (Source: PIB.)

> **Quick check 4.** Honey production nearly doubled from 80,530 tonnes in 2014-15 to 1,51,690 tonnes in 2025-26. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

Golden Revolution years?

1991–2003.

NHB founded?

1984.

NHM launched?

2005-06.

MIDH launched?

2014-15.

Sweet Revolution outlay?

₹500 crore.

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Practice MCQs

1. What period does the Golden Revolution refer to in India?

A. 1984-1995

B. 1991-2003

C. 2005-2015

D. 1965-1980

See answer ↓

2. What does the Golden Revolution refer to?

A. The growth of the gold mining industry

B. The expansion of jewellery exports

C. The growth of horticulture, covering fruits, vegetables, and honey

D. The growth of the banking sector

See answer ↓

3. Besides fruits and vegetables, which other product does the Golden Revolution's scope cover?

A. Milk

B. Honey

C. Foodgrains

D. Fish

See answer ↓

4. Which mission, launched in 2014-15, subsumed the National Horticulture Mission and five other schemes?

A. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

B. National Horticulture Mission (NHM) itself

C. NITI Aayog

D. National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)

See answer ↓

5. Which of these is the honey-specific government mission, distinct from the original 1991-2003 Golden Revolution?

A. National Horticulture Mission (NHM)

B. National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)

C. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

D. National Horticulture Board (NHB)

See answer ↓

6. Under the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission, how many world-class honey testing laboratories have been established?

A. 90

B. 7

C. 83

D. 66

See answer ↓

7. Roughly what share of India's total Makhana production comes from Bihar?

A. 50%

B. 85%

C. 25%

D. 99%

See answer ↓

8. Why did mango growers earn ₹15-20 more per kg under the new sea-route export protocol?

A. The mangoes were sold at a premium organic certification

B. Sea freight is cheaper than air freight, letting exporters pay more

C. Dubai raised its import tariff exemption

D. A new government subsidy for sea exports

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The Golden Revolution refers to India's horticulture growth period from 1991 to 2003. ↑ Q1
2. **C.** The Golden Revolution refers to the growth of horticulture, covering fruits, vegetables, and honey production. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** The Golden Revolution covers honey and beekeeping, alongside fruits, vegetables, flowers, and spices — unlike most other named agricultural revolutions, which cover a single sector. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** The Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), launched in 2014-15, subsumed NHM and five other schemes. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** The National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM), running 2020-21 to 2025-26 and branded the 'Sweet Revolution,' is a separate, honey-only scheme distinct from the broader 1991-2003 Golden Revolution. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** 7 world-class honey testing laboratories have been established, alongside 66 mini labs for adulteration detection. ↑ Q6
7. **B.** Bihar accounts for about 85% of India's Makhana production, and a separate HS Code for Makhana took effect in July 2025 to support export tracking. ↑ Q7
8. **B.** Since sea freight is substantially cheaper than air freight, exporters could offer farmers higher procurement prices, an additional ₹15-20 per kg. ↑ Q8

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **True.** ↑ 4

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