

History

with

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Tribal and Peasant Uprisings

The tribal movement were isolated outbursts against local (though more or less similar) grievances, which were primarily economic in nature. The primary targets were local vested interests; British official agencies were drawn into conflict, generally because grave questions of law and order were involved.

Tribal Uprising

- The laws introduced by the British rulers were too sophisticated to suit the tribal customs and conventions. Greedy moneylenders, traders and land-grabbers penetrated into tribal areas and exploited the simple, illiterate people whom law and administration did not protect.
- Increasing official control of forest zones for revenue purposes seriously disturbed tribal economy. They lost opportunities of shifting cultivation. They lost customary rights of using forest land for grazing and using forest timber as fuel. They found themselves exposed to exploitation by forest contractors.
- Their traditional religious life was disintegrated by the spread of Christianity by European missionaries. The new religion also affected their social customs and habits of life. This happened particularly in Bihar and the Assam hills.
- The social, political, economic and cultural life of Indians with the help of enactment of law led to discontentment amongst the Indians in general and peasants in particular. Absence of redressal of the same precipitated into rebellion and movement.

Important Uprisings in Eastern India

Faqir and Sanyasi Rebellion

- As a result of continuous wars and famines, combined with British exploitation of the land and people, Bengal witnessed great economic distress and political unrest in the 2nd half of the 18th century.

- A large number of uprooted and homeless people joined Hindu or Muslim groups of religious mendicants, known as Sanyasis or Faqirs, who formed large communities and earned their livelihood from beggary. Sanyasis began taking forcible what they could no longer get voluntarily.
- By 1772, there was a great sanyasi rebellion encompassing a wide belt from Rangpur to Dakha. Under their brave leader Majnu Shah Faqir, the Sanyasis defeated a company of sepoy and killed the commander. The Sanyasi rebellion continued till the end of the century.

Pagal Panth's Uprisings

- Pagal Panthi was a semi-religious sect. Its members came mostly from the primitive tribes. Hajong and Garo.
- The founder of this sect was a darvesh or a mendicant called Karam Shah, whose son and successor Tipu, motivated by religious and critical aims, organised an uprising of the Garo and Hajong peasants.
- Tipu openly took up their cause against the oppression of the zamindars, who realised illegal cases from the peasants. He asked his followers not to pay rent above a specified minimum.
- In January 1825, he led a mob of his armed brigands and attacked the houses of the Zamindars of Sherpur.
- The Pagal Panthi Uprising continued for about 10 years (1825-35) and was finally suppressed after massive military operations against them.

Ahom Revolt (1828-1833)

- **Area** Assam
- **Leader** Gomdhar Konwar
- **Causes** The British had pledged to withdraw from Assam after the First Burma War (1824-26), but they tried to incorporate Ahom territories in the company's dominion.
- Finally, the company gave upper Assam to Maharaja Purandar Singh Narendra and part of the kingdom was restored to the Assamese king.

Kol Mutiny (1831-32)

- **Area** Ranch, Singhbhum, Hazaribagh, Palamu, Western parts of Manbhum.
- **Leader** Buddhu Bhagat

- **Causes** Transfer of land from Kol headmen (Mundas) to outsiders like Sikh and Muslim farmers.
- Military operations were undertaken to settle the mutiny.

Khasi Uprising (1829-1833)

- **Area** Tribal area of Garo Khasi and Jaintia hills in present Meghalaya.
- **Leader** Tirath Singh
- **Tribes** Khasi, Garo, Kham Pti, Singh pas involved
- **Causes** The British wanted to build a road connecting Brahmaputra valley with Sylhet. This led to infiltration of foreign population in the area.
- English military force suppressed the revolt by 1833.

Santhal Rebellion (1855-1856)

- The Santhal Rebellion of 1855-56, was marked by some of the worst features of elemental tribal passions and open denunciation of British rule. The rebellion, covering the districts of Birbhum, Singhbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh, Bhagalpur and Munger in Orissa (Odisha) and Bihar was precipitated mainly by economic causes.
- The moneylenders and colonial administrators both exploited them. The **Diku** outsider merchants charged interest on loans, ranging from 50 to 500% exploited and cheated the tribals in many other ways, often grabbing their lands.
- The tribals turned against the British Government under the leadership of two Santhal brothers, Siddhu and Kanhu, more than ten thousand Santhals assembled in June, 1855 when a divine order was issued asking the Santhals to get out of the control of their oppressors and take possession of the country and set-up a government of their own.
- The rebels cut off the postal and railway communications between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal, proclaimed the end of the company's rule and commencement of the Santbal regime. They attacked the houses of moneylenders, zamindars, white planters, railway engineers and British officials.
- The open war with the British continued till February, 1856. when the rebel leaders were finally captured and the movement was put down with a great deal of repression.

Munda Uprising (1839-1900)

- The Ulgulan of Birsa Munda in the region South of Ranchi in 1899 1900 is the best Known tribal rebellion Feudal zamindari or individual tenures was the key to the agrarian disorders that climaxed in the religious political Movement of Birsa in March. 1879, Mundas under the leadership claimed that Chota Nagpur belonged to them.
- The Mundas envisaged an ideal and just society which would be free from internal as well as European exploiters, women also participated in the movement.
- Birsa Munda was the son of a share-cropper who had received some education from the missionaries and then came under Vaishnava influence. His initial popularity was based on medicinal and healing powers, by which Birsa claimed to make his followers invulnerable.
- The rebels were defeated in a fight and Birsa died in jail there was some belated relief in the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, with recognition to joint farming rights and ban on both begari or forced labour.

Some Other Important Uprisings

Chaur Uprising 1766-1772, 1795, 1816)

- Area Midnapore district. (Bengal)
- Causes Famine, enhanced land revenue and economic distress HO Rising The HO and Munda tribesman of Chota Nagpur district took arms against the company in 1820-22 and again, in 1831 till the final settlement was made in 1837.

Ramosi Revolt (1822, 1825-1826)

- In 1822, the Ramosis revolted in Satara under Chittur Singh to oppose heavy land revenue assessment and revenue collection methods. Famine and scarcity drove them to a rebellion in 1825-26, this time under Umaji The Ramosis' uprising which continued for 3 years, was finally ended when people were given land grants and admitted in the ranks of the hill police.

Khond Uprising (1837- 56)

- The Khonds lived in vast hill tracts stretching from Tamil Nadu to Bengal and covering central provinces Their uprisings from 1837 to 1856, were directed against the British the movement was led by Chakra Bisoi in the name of the Young Raja.

- The main issue was the attempt by the government to suppress human suppress human (Mariah), introduction of new taxes by the British and the influx of Zamindars and Sahukars into their areas, which was causing the tribals untold misery.
- Chakra Bisoi disappeared in 1855, after which the movement petered out. Another important leader of revolt was Radhakrishna Dandasena.

Naikada Revolt

- The Naikada forest tribes in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, launched revolts against British officers and Hindus with religious fervour and attacked police stations in 1868. in a bid to establish a Dharma Raj under their charismatic leaders.

Kharwar Uprising

- The crushing of the Santha' rebellion was followed by the Kharwar uprising of the 1870's which preached monotheism and internal reform at first, but had begun to turn into a campaign against revenue settlement operations just before it was suppressed.

Koya Rebellion

It occurred in 1879-80, in the Eastern Godavari tract of present day Andhra Pradesh and also affected some District in Orissa. The rebellion was led by Tomma Sora and reflected problems faced by tribals. like erosion of customary rights over forests, police exactions exploitation by money lenders and new excise regulations restricting domestic production of paddy. Sora was shot dead by the police and the movement collapsed, but only with the use of six regiments of the Madras infantry in 1886, another uprising took place here. The rebels, led by Raja Anantayyar, formed themselves into a Ram Sandhu (Ram's Army) and appealed to the Maharaja of Jeypore to help them in throwing out the British.

Bhil Uprising

- In Southern Rajasthan, the Bhils were stirred to action by a Reform Movement under Govind Guru, who was a bonded labourer. By 1913. it developed into a bid to set-up a Bhil Raj. The British were able to suppress them only after considerable resistance

The Kittur Rebellion

- The British prevented the adopted son of the Chief of Kittur (in Karnataka) from assuming power by taking over the administrator. What resulted was the Kittur uprisings of 1924-29 led by chennamma, the widow of the chief. The rebels declared Kittur an independent state before being crushed by the British

Rampa Rebellion

- A unique example of tribal militancy came from the Rampa region North of Godavari which had witnessed various uprisings in the 19th century.
- Their grievances were against moneylenders and forest laws. The movement was led by an outsider Alluri Sitarama Raju, claiming astrological and healing powers who has become a folk hero in Andhra Pradesh.
- He was inspired by the Non-Cooperation Movement and admired Gandhi though he considered violence necessary to win tribal goals. The revolt came to an end after the execution of Raju in May, 1924.

Movements by the Deposed Rulers and Zamindars

- These movements were caused by the Aggressive Policy of Annexation by the British and the subsequent disturbances in the economy of the regions.

First Polygar War (1799)

- Leaders Kattabomma Nayak, Subramania Pillai and Soundra Pandian Nayak

Polygar Rebellions (Kurnool, 1799-1805)

- Polygars were the offshoots of the Nayankara system prevalent in the Vijayanagara administration. The conflict was on the question of the collection of taxes, rather, who should collect it. The traditional classes or the company officials.

Second Polygar War (1800-1801)

- Also known as the South Indian Rebellion, the rebellion broke out when polygar armies under Gopala Nayak, Kerala Varma and Krishnappa Nayak bombed the British barracks in Coimbatore in 1800. The suppression was followed by signing of the Carnatic Treaty, 1801, where by the British assumed direct control over Tamil Nadu and the Polygar system was replaced by the Zamindari settlement.

Velu Thampi (1765-1809)

- The Diwan of Travancore (Kerala), Velu Thampi revolted in 1808-09 after the British tried to take away his Diwanship and forced the state to conform with the conditions of the Subsidiary Alliance system. He was the only head of a state to be hanged during the British rule.

Ganjam Revolt (1835)

- Rebellion led by Gumsur Zamindar, Dhananjaya Bhanja erupted in 1835, in Ganjam district of Orissa (Odisha).

The Mysore Rebellion (1840 –1841)

- A revolt was organised by Dhondji Wagh after Tipu Sultan's death in Mysore. With the battlefield against the British, the revolt subsided.

Sawantwadi Revolt (1844)

- The revolt in 1844, was led by a Maratha chief, Phond Sawant of Sawantwadi with the support of other sardars. The rebels captured forts in fighting the British, but were finally forced to seek refuge in Goa. The rebellion came to an end with the capture of the rebels.

The Gadkar Revolt (1844)

- Gadkaris were the hereditary servants of the Marathas who became most displeased with the British regime for its Arbitrary System of Land Revenue Collection. Many Gadkaris were forced to give up service and mamlatdars were asked to oversee the lands. So, the Gadkaris rebelled in 1844 in Kolhapur. They cost the British much of material loss before they were finally subdued.

Peasant Movements

Movement	Location	Leader	Cause
Pagal Parthis (1825-35)	Bengal	Karam Shan, Tipu Shah (Hajong and Garo tribes)	Against hike rent in Bengal
Indigo Revolt (1860)	Nadla district of Bengal	Digambar Biswas, Bishwas, Bishnu Harish Chandra Mukherjee (editor of newspaper Hindu Patriot)	Peasants were forced to grow indigo in their field by European factory owners Dinbandhu Mitra had written about this revolt play Neel Darpan (translated English by Madhusudan Datta).
Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870)	Pune	By MGRao	To popularise the peasants' legal rights.

Movement	Location	Leader	Cause
Pabna Agrarian Uprising (1873)	Pabna district of Bengal	Shah Chandra Roy, Shambhu Patel	Against oppression of peasants by Zamindar. Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885 passed.
Ramosi Uprising (1877-87)	Parts of Andhra Pradesh Maharashtra	Vasudev Balwant Phadke	It was against the British failure to take up an anti-famine measure.
Bijolia Movement (1905,1913 1916,1927)	Rajasthan	Silaram Das, Vijay Pathhlk Shigh	The movement arose due to imposition of 86 different type of cases on peasants.
Champaran Satyagraha (1917)	Bihar	Gandhi ji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Raj Kumar Shukla	Against the Tinkathia System imposed by the European Indigo planters.
Kheda Satyagraha (1918)	Gujarat	Gandhi ji and Vallabhba. Patel	Against ignored appeal for remission revenue in case of crop failure.
Uttar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (1918)	Uttar Pradesh	Indra Narayan Dwivedi, Madan Mohan Malaviya	To organise a strong peasant movement in Uttar Pradesh,'
Awadh Kisan Sabha (1920)	Oudh	Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Rama Chandra	To organise peasants.
Moplah Rebellion (1921)	Malabar region Kerala	Sayyed Ali, sayyid Fazl	Against the oppression and exploitation of Muslim Moplah peasants by Hindu Zamindar (jemnis) and British Government.

Movement	Location	Leader	Cause
Eka Movement (1921)	Awadh	Madari Parsi	Higher extraction of rent.
Andhra Ryots Association (1928)	Andhra Pradesh	NG Ranga	Abolition of Zamindari.
All India Kisan Sabha (1936)	–	Swami Sahajananda	Protection of peasants from economic exploitation.
Tebhaga Movement (1946)	Bengal	Communists	Against zamindars and moneylenders.
Telangana Movement (1951)	Hyderabad		Against moneylenders and officials of Nizam of Hyderabad.