

Class 9th History

Lesson -5

The Revolt Of 1857

1. SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS :

(a) From which year was the rule of the East India Company started in India and to which year was it continued ?

Ans : The East India Company started to rule India from their victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757 till 1858 when the British crown took over the administration of India by the Government of India Act, 1858.

(b) Name the port where Vasco-da-Gama landed first time of India.

Ans : Vasco-da-Gama landed at the port of Calicut on India's Malabar Coast.

(c) Who was the Nawab of Bengal during the battle of Plassey ?

Ans : The Nawab of Bengal during the battle of Plassey was Siraj-ud-daula.

(d) From whom did the East India Company get the charter to trade with India ?

Ans : The East India Company got the charter to trade with India from Queen Elizabeth in 1600.

(e) Who was the Government-General of India in 1857 ?

Ans : The Government-General of India in 1857 was Lord Canning.

(f) Who was declared as the Emperor Hindustan by the rebels in 1857 ?

Ans : Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II was declared the emperor of Hindustan by the rebels in 1857.

(g) Who was the first martyr of the revolt of 1857 ?

Ans : The first martyr of the revolt of 1857 was Mangal Pandey.

(h) Who was the first Viceroy of India ?

Ans :- The first Viceroy of India was Lord Canning.

Alternate Question:

(i) Name the place where Bahadur Shah died.

Ans : Bahadur Shah II died in Rangoon where he had been exiled after the revolt of 1857.

(j) Who described the revolt of 1857 as the first war of Indian independence ?

Ans : The scholars of 20th cent. described the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

(k) Who was the leader of the revolt of 1857 in Assam ?

Ans : Maniram Dewan was the leader of the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

(l) Name the person who was hanged together with Maniram Dewan at Jorhat.

Ans : Peoli Borua was hanged along with Maniram Dewan at Jorhat.

(m) Who was decided to be installed as the king of Assam in 1857?

Ans : The rebels decided to install Kandarpeswar Singha as the king of Assam in 1857.

2. WRITE SHORT NOTES :

(a) Battle of Buxar.

Ans : Battle of Buxar :- The battle of Buxar fought in 1764 is one of the landmark battles in the history of India. It made the British a political power. After their victory at Plassey in 1757, the British appointed Mir Qasim, son-in-law of Mir Jaffar. However, in 1763 the British deposed Mir Qasim from the Nawabship of Bengal as he could not pay up all that they demanded. Therefore, he fled to Oudh where he formed an alliance with Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh and Shah Alam II, the Mughal emperor and their combined forces invaded Bengal in October, 1764 which was then under the British.

However, the battle ended leading to the victory of the British. The battle of Buxar is viewed as one of the most significant battles in the history of India. This battle made the British the sole master of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The resources of this rich region helped them to conquer the rest of India eventually. By this victory the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II became a mere pensioner under them and his Prime Minister Shuja-ud-Daula became a puppet in their hands. Many historians believe that the battle of Buxar laid the real foundation of British empire in India.

(b) Dalhousie's policy of expansion.

Ans : Dalhousie's policy of expansion :- Lord Dalhousie was a ruthless imperialist who wanted to annex every part of India to the British empire. He used the following three means to achieve this goal:

(i) By the application of the Doctrine of Lapse.

(ii) Annexation on grounds of misgovernment.

(iii) Suspension of titles and pension of rulers.

The kingdoms of Satara, Jaipur, Sambalpur, Bhagat, Udaipur, Jhansi and Nagpur were annexed to the British empire by the application of the Doctrine of Lapse. The rulers of these kingdoms were not allowed to adopt sons to continue their rule. Dalhousie's annexation on the basis of the policy of doctrine of lapse caused a lot of uneasiness in the minds of almost all ruling princes. Oudh was annexed on the pretext of misgovernment. The dignities and the royal titles in the case of Carnatic and Tanjore were confiscated.

Dalhousie's suspension of pension to the Maratha chief alienated this martial race. Thus, the ruthless imperialistic policies of Lord Dalhousie created such enemies as Rani of Jhansi, Tantia Tope, Nana Saheb, Bahadur Shah, Nawab Wajid Shah of Oudh, Begum Hajrat Mahal, etc. These men and women became the key leaders of the great revolt of 1857. Thus, Lord Dalhousie's policy of expansion was greatly responsible for the outbreak of the revolt of 1857.

(c) Enfield Rifle.

Ans : Enfield Rifle :- The immediate cause for the outbreak of the revolt of 1857 was the order to use a

particular type of gun called Enfield rifles as well as a type of greased cartridges. These Enfield rifles first used in the Crimean war (1854-56) were introduced in India towards the end of 1856. This particular type of gun required special type of cartridges. The cartridges of these guns had a greased cover whose end had to be bitten off before the cartridge was loaded into the rifle. Soon a rumour spread among the Sepoys of the British Army that the greased cover contained the fat of pigs and cows.

The Sepoys all over India were enraged. Most of them thought that it would endanger their religion and that the British had introduced the new cartridge deliberately to destroy their religion. They, therefore, refused the order of the British officers to use such cartridges. When they were compelled to do so they rebelled and broke out in open rebellion against the British might. This resulted what is known as the revolt of 1857.

(d) Rani Laxmibai.

Ans : Rani Laxmibai :- Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi was one of the most outstanding personalities of the revolt of 1857. She joined the rebels when the British refused to acknowledge her right to adopt an heir to the throne of Jhansi and annexed her state in 1853 on the grounds of Doctrine of Lapse. She, therefore, unfurled the banner of revolt against the British and pledged to fight them to the last which she did so marvellously and courageously, creating thereby an immortal name in

Indian history. In her war against the British, she was helped by Tantia Tope, a follower of Nana Saheb as well as by Shahjada Firoz Shah, a scion of the Mughal dynasty. She eventually became the leader of the revolt in Central India. Although she was defeated by the British at several places yet she didn't give it up and continued to fight against the British till her death. In the battle led by British general, Sir Hugh Rose in 1858 she was severely wounded and died on 17th June, 1858. Her death was a blow to the other leaders of the rebellion. Her spirit and courage became an epitome of the Indian quest for freedom from foreign subjugation. Sir Hugh Rose, the British general who fought against her described her as the greatest leader of the revolt of 1857.

(e) Konwar Singh.

Ans : Konwar Singh :- Konwar Singh was a rich Zamindar of Jagadishpur near Arrah in Bihar who was reduced to poverty as a result of the defective land settlement and revenue policies of the British. Therefore, when the Sepoys broke out in open rebellion he too joined them and led the rebellion in Bihar. Although he was nearly eighty years old, he was perhaps the most outstanding military leader and strategist of the revolt. The Sepoys of Danapur joined him and he was able to wage a series of battles against the British. He was able to defeat Capt. John Barr sent against him. However, another huge British force sent under the command of Major Vincent Ayer was able to

drive out Konwar Singh from Bihar. In one of the battle against the British, he sustained injuries and died sometime later in 1858. Konwar Singh is considered to be the most brilliant leader of the revolt of 1857.

(f) Preparation of the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

Ans : Preparation of the revolt of 1857 in Assam :- The revolt of 1857 had its impact on Assam as well. Though the region did not indulge in major anti-British outbursts yet there was some sort of public expression of anger against the British during this time. The main organisers of the revolt of 1857 in Assam were Maniram Dewan and Peoli Borua. Maniram Dewan who was in Calcutta to meet the Governor-general in connection with getting some economic concessions for him came to know about the various events of the revolt of 1857.

He found it the ideal time to hit at the British as he had many personal grievances against the British. Therefore, he wrote several letters to his friends and followers in Assam asking them to get ready to revolt against the autocratic administration of the British in Assam. But unfortunately, before anything could happen the plan of revolt came to be known by the British and it was ruthlessly suppressed.

3. ESSAY TYPE QUESTIONS :

(a) Give your opinion whether the revolt of 1857 can be termed as the first war of India's independence.

Ans : The Mutiny of 1857 is viewed as one of the most glorious events in the annals of our history. Some call it 'Sepoy Mutiny'. Others name it 'A War of Indian Independence'. However, you name it and whatever you may attribute the reasons for it, it was the first major attempt on the part of the Indians to throw out the British from India.

Different views regarding the nature: Historians have held the following three views regarding the nature of the revolt of 1857.

(i) It was a Sepoy Mutiny.

(ii) It was a war of Indian Independence.

(iii) It was neither wholly a war of National Independence nor merely a Sepoy Mutiny.

A majority of the Indian historians are of the view that the Revolt of 1857 was basically a War of Indian Independence. Vir Savarkar, Ashok Mehta, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, etc. strongly supported this view. Vir Savarkar in his famous book 'A War of Indian Independence' strongly advocates this view. For many, it was a national war for freedom. The following arguments have been put forward in support of this view.

(i) The uprising could not have spread so fast and so rapidly had not the general public supported it.

(ii) In the revolt, both the Muslims and Hindus joined hands to oust the British.

(iii) At some places even women put on men's attire and took part in the fighting.

(iv) The trial of thousands of civilians involved in the revolt of 1857 shows that it was a general uprising. However, many historians do not agree that it was a war of independence. It lacked certain basic qualities of a national movement involving the masses. It broke out without any preparation. There was no national leader who commanded national respect or fame.

There were only local leaders who organised some kind of rebellion in their region. Even Bahadur Shah II who was made the emperor by the Sepoys did not accept him as their leader. Many parts of India did not join the revolt. Kashmir and many parts of South India did not join the movement. The Sikhs did not support the movement. Thus, the movement lacked national character. Therefore, it is very difficult to say that the revolt of 1857 was a national war of independence.

Recently, two distinguished Indian historians, Dr. R.C. Majumdar and Dr. S.N. Sen who have made exhaustive study of all available records have come to the conclusion that the revolt of 1857 was neither wholly a national war of Independence nor merely a military revolt. According to them, in 1857-58 India was still a 'geographical expression' and the feeling of Indianess'

has not been born yet. The leaders of the rebellion were no national leaders. Bahadur Shah II was no national king. Even Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Konwar Singh and even the Sepoys fought to obtain some material benefits. None of them fought to make their country free and independent from the British domination. The majority of Indians remained mere spectators and some of them, even allied with the British to put down the uprising. According to them, the revolt of 1857 was neither wholly a national war of Independence nor merely a military revolt. Its national character came much later during the freedom struggle movement. This seems to be the correct view.

All that we can say is that it was an important event that shook the very foundation of the British empire in India. For the first time Indians irrespective of caste, colour and creed stood together and fought against the British. In this respect, the revolt of 1857 is an important milestone in our history and must be considered the bedrock from which the later freedom struggle movement commenced.

(b) Discuss the cause of the revolt of 1857.

Ans : The great revolt of 1857 is considered to be one of the most significant events of our history. The episode had a great impact on the events that unfolded in the later years. It was the starting point of the freedom struggle movement in India. That is why, many consider it as the first war of Indian independence. However, you

may name it and whatever you may attribute the reasons for it, it was the first major impact on the part of the Indians to throw the British out from India. The main causes for this great rebellion were the following.

(i) Political causes :- The policy of ruthless conquests and annexation followed by the British ever since their victory at Plassey in 1757 was one of the major causes for this uprising. The Kingdoms of Mysore, Hyderabad, Punjab, Oudh, Jhansi, Mughuls, and the Marathas who constituted the pride and glory of India disappeared as a result of the policy of annexation followed by the British.

Lord Dalhousie's policy of ruthless annexation by way Doctrine of Lapse created uneasiness and fear among the native rulers. The suspension of the pension to Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Baji Rao II, the ill-treatment of Bahadur Shah II, the last Mughul emperor, the annexation of Oudh on grounds of mis-government etc. inflamed the Indian mind.

(ii) Economic causes :- The policies of the East India Company completely disrupted the whole economic fabric of India. High land taxation, non-support of agriculture, recurring famines, frequent wars which destroyed the crops, the annexation of native states which catered to the employment of thousands, dumping of the British factory-made goods to India, etc. ruined the Indian economy and made hundreds jobless and poverty-stricken. India became a milch cow to feed

England while her sons were gradually pushed to starvation.

(iii) Social and religious causes :- The social and religious discontent of the time hastened the crisis further. British followed a policy of contempt towards the Indians and looked down on them in every way. Even the modern reforms such as, the Railways, telegraph, western education, female education, abolition of Sati, abolition of child-marriage etc. were looked upon with suspicion.

(iv) Military causes :- One of the primary causes for the outbreak of Sepoy Mutiny was the grievances of the Indian Sepoys. They were not allowed to wear caste, sectarian marks, beards or turbans, etc. They were poorly paid and miserably treated by the British officers. The annexation of Oudh in 1856 on grounds of mis-government infuriated a good number of Sepoys as large number of Sepoys belonged to Oudh. The Sepoys were thus discontented and were waiting for an opportunity to strike at the British.

(v) Immediate cause :- In this atmosphere of raging discontent, the greased cartridges acted like the proverbial match to the mine. In 1856, the British government ordered the use of 'greased cartridges' which seemed to have contained the fat of pigs and cows. The Sepoys became convinced that the introduction of greased cartridges was a deliberate move to defile their religion. The result was that the

Sepoys in Meerut revolted against this order and broke out in open rebellion on 9th May, 1857. After having freed their jailed companions they set out for Delhi which was seized by them on 12th May. They then declared Bahadur Shah II as the emperor of India. This was the signal for the outbreak of the revolt all over India. Soon Lucknow, Bareilly, Kanpur, Jhansi, Oudh, Bihar, etc. became its centres. However, the British were able to suppress the revolt with a strong hand and by July, 1858 the revolt was completely over.

(c) Discuss the role played by Begum Hajrat Mahal and Rani Laxmibai in the revolt of 1857.

Ans : Hajrat Mahal :- Hajrat Mahal was the wife of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Oudh. The annexation of Oudh on grounds of mis-government by Lord Dalhousie was a blow to her and she was determined to throw the British out from her territory. Therefore, when the Sepoys broke out in open rebellion in May, 1857, she offered her services and led the revolt in Lucknow. Hazrat Mahal declared her minor son Kadir as the new Nawab of Oudh and she began to rule on his behalf.

During the revolt of 1857, she organised a movement against the British in the region of Oudh. Hundreds of British who had been staying in different parts of the state took shelter in the British residency. She therefore, attacked the residency with her force. In this venture, she was helped by Maulavi Ahmadullah of Faizabad.

However, they were defeated by Sir Campbell and the British people were thus saved. Despite her defeat at several places she continued her fight against the British. But the death of her strongest supporter, Maulavi Ahmadullah in 1858, broke her courage and she fled to Nepal. One of the notable features of the revolt of 1857 in Oudh was that it was supported by the landlords, peasants and the common people. Her courage and patriotism was unmatched and she became one of the heroines of the revolt of 1857.

Rani of Jhansi :- Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi was one of the most outstanding personalities of the revolt of 1857. She was the wife of Gangadhar Rao, the king of Jhansi. After the death of Gangadhar Rao, Lord Dalhousie annexed the state of Jhansi on the grounds of the doctrine of Lapse in 1853. She was not allowed to adopt a son as per the Hindu custom. This action of Lord Dalhousie infuriated her and as soon as the revolt of 1857 broke out, she too organised a revolt in central India.

However, Sir Hugh Rose tried to prevent her from organising a major revolt. She was assisted by Tantia Tope. At Kalpi, a combined fight was waged against the British by Tantia Tope, Rao Saheb, Laxmibai. But, they were defeated. In another battle in June, 1858, she was severely wounded and died. Her death was a great blow to the revolt of 1857 and it broke the courage of the rebels. Nevertheless her courage and patriotism became a great example for other leaders and her story

became an epic story. Sir Hugh Rose the British general who defeated her described her as the greatest leader of the revolt of 1857.

(d) Give a description of Maniram Dewan's role in the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

Ans : The great revolt of 1857 had its impact on Assam as well. The revolt in Assam was organised by an Assamese leader named Maniram Dewan. He was the son of Ramdutta Dolakasari Borua of Charing. Since the beginning of the British occupation of Assam which started with the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, he came into contact with the British and served them in various capacities. For some time he was a 'Tahasiladar' of Jorhat and then became 'Sirastedar' in the rebellions that took place in Assam against the British government in the first half of the 19th cent.

Maniram helped the British in suppressing them and thus became a friend of the British administration. As a result, he became very powerful and was able to amass a good deal of wealth and influence. Later, he became the 'Borbhandar Barua' of Purandar Singha when he was installed as the king of upper Assam. In 1838, Purandar Singha was removed from the throne by the British. But, Maniram Dewan continued to enjoy great privileges and remained a good friend of the British.

A few years later, his relationship with the British rulers began to sour as Lt. Brodie who came to Sivasagar as

the principal Assistant of Francis Jehkins, the commissioner of Assam. Maniram's relationship with him was not smooth and this led to the loss of certain Mauzas under him which the British had given him as a reward for his service to them. He therefore, gave up his government job and joined as Dewan of Assam Tea Company. In 1844, he resigned this job and started ten independent tea gardens on his own. His attempt at cultivating tea and establishing independent tea gardens led to his conflict with the government. They took away all the mauzas or properties given to him.

Maniram was greatly agitated because he had to pay high rate of revenue to the government for possessing ten tea gardens. While the European planters enjoyed a lot of concessions and British facilities he was denied all of them. Therefore, Maniram submitted two petitions to British authorities praying for some relief. However, the local British authorities in Assam didn't do anything about his requests. Therefore, Maniram went to Calcutta with the hope of meeting the Governor-General.

He had two goals in mind in coming to Calcutta. Firstly, he wanted to install Kandarpeswar Singha the grandson of Purandar Singha as the king of Assam and bring back the old days of Ahom Monarchy. Secondly, he wanted the Governor-General to provide him some economic relief particularly from paying high rate of tax to the government. While in Calcutta he came to know about the revolt of the Sepoys in different parts of India. Maniram took this as a golden opportunity to organise a

revolt and throw out the British from Assam too. With this purpose in view, he wrote several secret letters to Kandarpeswar Singha and to some of his friends and followers in Assam asking them to get ready for an open revolt against the British. The main persons whom he contacted for this purpose were Madhura Koch, Chitrasen Borbora, Konala Saringia Borua, Devram Dihingia Phukan, Marangi Khowa Gohain, Peoli Borua, etc. Peoli Borua who the and Mahaesh Chandra Gabharumeha Borua who were the close friends of Kandarpeswar Singha.

They were very supportive of the move. Some of the leaders contacted the soldiers stationed at Golaghat, Chaikhowa and Dibrugarh. They decided to break out in open rebellion against the British in October, 1857, on the day of Maha Ashtami of the Durga Puja festival. But unfortunately, the British came to know about the plan. Haranath Parvatia Borua, a police daroga, captured a secret letter of Maniram written to Kandarpeswar Singha and submitted it to Capt. Holroyd, the principal Assistant of the Commissioner of Assam. Soon Kandarpeswar Singha and other leaders were arrested by the British. Maniram Dewan was taken into custody in Calcutta.

Maniram was brought to Assam and a formal trial by Capt. Holroyd was held in which Maniram Dewan and Peoli Borua were sentenced to death. They were hanged to death at Jorhat on 26th February, 1858. The other leaders were imprisoned for life. Some of the leaders of the revolt were sent to the notorious prison of

Kalpani in the Andaman islands. However, Kandarp War was left free as he was not much involved in the revolt. Thus ended the revolt of 1857 in Assam. But it had some repercussions in the society. The noble and great example of Maniram became a great example of Assamese courage and sense of pride. Maniram became a martyr of freedom and thus immortalised himself in the pages of history.

(e) Discuss briefly the causes of the failure of the revolt of 1857.

Ans : The Revolt of 1857 was a great and courageous attempt by some Indian patriots to get rid of the foreign rule. But unfortunately the attempt failed. It failed due to the following reasons.

(i) Rebels were short of weapons :- While the British had most modern weapons the rebels fought with old types of weapons such as swords, spears, and outdated guns. They were no match for the mechanised units of the British. Secondly the British forces had better communication network such as railways, telegraph, telephone, etc. which immensely helped them to bring men and materials to the required places.

(ii) Weak leadership :- Most the leaders of the revolt fought for their own selfish interests. They had no common goal or high ideals to fight the war. Rani Laxmibai, Begum Hajrat Mahal, Konwar Singh, Nana Saheb, etc. took part in the revolt with certain personal

objectives in mind. Their aim was not to expel the British from India.

(iii) The revolt did not spread all over India :- One of the main causes for the failure of the revolt was that it was confined to few areas of India. It had no impact in Rajasthan, Orissa, the whole of South India and most parts of Punjab. As a result these places remained peaceful. Hence the British authorities could bring forces from these areas to central India where the revolt was mostly concentrated.

(iv) Lack of unity :- There was no unity among the leaders during the revolt. All the leaders like Rani of Jhansi, Begum Hajrat Mahal, Konwar Singh, Nana Saheb, etc. had their personal interest to participate in the revolt. On the other hand, some of the native rulers like king of Kashmir, minister of Gwalior, minister of Hyderabad, etc. joined their hands with the British. The help rendered by Gulab Sing, the king of Kashmir, Dinakar Rao, a minister of Gwalior and Salar Jang, minister of Hyderabad made British victorious in the revolt.