

Chapter-05

When People Rebel 1857 and After

Policies and the People: The policies of the East India Company affected different people like kings, queens, peasants, landlords, tribals and soldiers in different ways.

Nawabs Lose their Power:

1. Since the mid-eighteenth century. Nawabs and rajas had seen their power erode. They lost their authority and honour.
2. In 1801, a subsidiary alliance was imposed on Awadh and it was annexed in 1856 on the basis of misadministration.
3. Along with this direct conquest and Doctrine of Lapse were imposed and symbols of authority were destroyed.
4. The company began to plan to bring an end to the Mughal dynasty and Bahadur Shah Zafar was declared as the last King of Mughals.

The Peasants and the Sepoys:

1. In the countryside peasants and zamindars resented the high taxes and the rigid methods of revenue collection.
2. The Indian sepoys in the employment of the company were unhappy about their pay, allowances and conditions of service.
3. Moreover, some new rules violated their religious sensibilities and beliefs. But British made it compulsory for everyone in service to follow all the terms.
4. Sepoys also had the agriculture background, so they were directly affected with revenue policies of British.

Responses to Reforms:

1. The British believed that Indian society had to be reformed.
2. Laws were passed to stop Sati practice & to encourage remarriage of widows.
3. The literature and the culture of India was also made to feel by Britishers as obsolete and unworthy. One of the British writer said that the entire literature of India and Arab is

equal to the one shelf of the books of english literature

4. Indian took these reforms as offense to their culture and heritage and considered them as subordination of religious practices and opposed them.

Through the Eyes of the People: People concived that the English were determined to wipe out the religions of Hindu and the Muslims and wanted the whole population to be converted in christianity.

A Mutiny Becomes a Popular Rebellion

1. In May 1857, a massive rebellion started against the company's very presence in India.
2. The instant reason of mutiny was the use of cartirdges greased with cow and pig fat. sepoys took it as blot on their religious sentiments and newa spread in all the regiments.
3. Sepoys multinied in several places beginning from Meerut and a large number of people from different sections of society rose up in rebellion.
4. Anger against high taxes, disruption of crafts and trade, dissatisfaction of nobles and rumour in sepoys finally lead to the mutiny of 1857.

From Meerut to Delhi:

1. On 29 March 1857, Mangal Pandey, a yound soldier was hanged to death for attacking his officers in Barrackpore and soldiers also rebelled against the use of greased cartridges.
2. In response to this revolt soldiers were captured and were put in jail.
3. The response of the other Indian soldiers in Meerut was quite extraordinary, they marched to the jail to Meerut and released the imprisoned sepoys.
4. The sepoys rode all night of 10 May to reach Delhi.
5. The regiments stationed in Delhi also rose up in rebellion and many British officers were killed, arms and ammunition seized, buildings set on fire.
6. The soldiers forcibly met Bahadur Shah Zafar and proclaimed him as their leader.
7. Bahadur Shah accepted the rebellion's plea & called regional rulers to fight against british.

The Rebellion Spreads:

1. After the British were routed from Delhi there was no uprising for almost a week. Then a spurt of mutinies began.

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2. Regiment after Regiment mutinied and took off to join other troops at nodal points like Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow.
 3. One by one the rebel spread to entire northern India lead by different leaders such as Nana Saheb of Kanpur, Birjis Qadr of Lucknow and his mother Begum Hazrat Mahal, Rani Lakshmibai took an active part in organizing the uprising against the British.
 4. The whole scene frightened the British & they started changing notes of fear.
 5. The regional rulers allied with Mughal ruler as they thought that this way they can restore their authority to rule which was not possible under British administration.

The company Fights Back:

1. Unnerved by the scale of the upheaval, they decided to repress the revolt with all its might. New laws were made, best generals were called & better armaments were used.
2. Delhi was recaptured from the rebel forces in September 1857.
3. The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in court and sentenced to life imprisonment. He along with his wife was sent to prison in Rangoon and his two sons were killed in front of his eyes.
4. People continued to resist and battle the British. The British had to fight for two years to suppress the massive forces of popular rebellion and it was in 1859 that they were successful in getting the all rebel suppressed.
5. British fought back hard and on their hand tried to win the people's faith again by giving the rights to landlords who supported them and to those who did not kill any white.

Aftermath:

1. Some important changes were introduced by the British after they regained control by the end of 1859. The British Parliament passed a new Act 1858 and transferred the power of the East India Company to the British crown in order to ensure a more responsible management of Indian affairs.
2. All ruling chiefs of the country were allowed to pass on their kingdoms to their heirs, including the adopted sons.
3. Ratio of Indian soldiers was reduced in army and European soldiers were increased.
4. British started the policy of non interference in social and religious sphere and just restricted only the political sphere.