

Lesson 19

POPULAR RESISTANCE TO COMPANY RULE

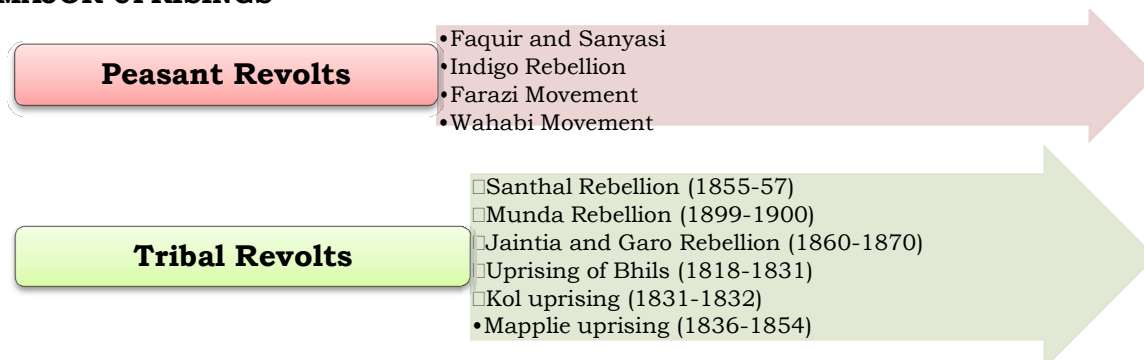
Summary

The establishment of the British rule in India impacted different sections of the Indian society adversely. The peasants, the tribals, the sepoys, the zamindars etc. were under pressure. The Britishers were implementing new policies which altered the traditional customs and practices. The British administration was not being able to address to the grievances of the Indians. The discontent among the Indians was manifested from time to time and various peasant and tribal uprising took place.

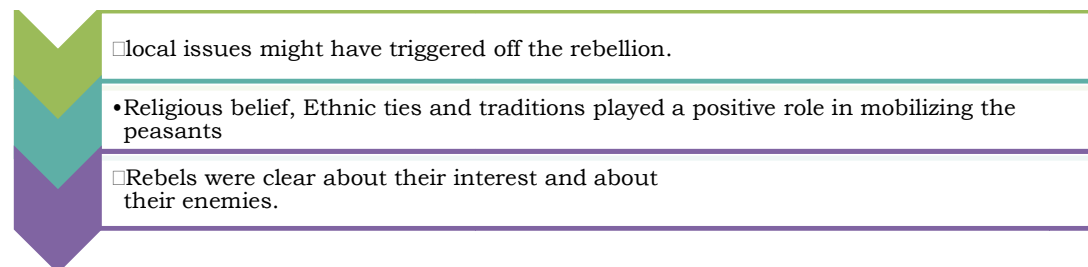
CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO POPULAR REVOLT

- The colonial rulers were concerned only with the collection of revenues in time which were fixed at high rates.
- Zamindars and others who were engaged in collecting the revenue were least concerned about the paying capacity of the cultivators and forcefully collected the taxes.
- Under the colonial rule, the nexus of the official, the landlord and the money lender combined together to exploit the peasantry.
- Colonization of the economy, changes introduced by the British in local administration and society created discontent and resentment among local population.
- This discontent at various junctures took the form of rebellion.

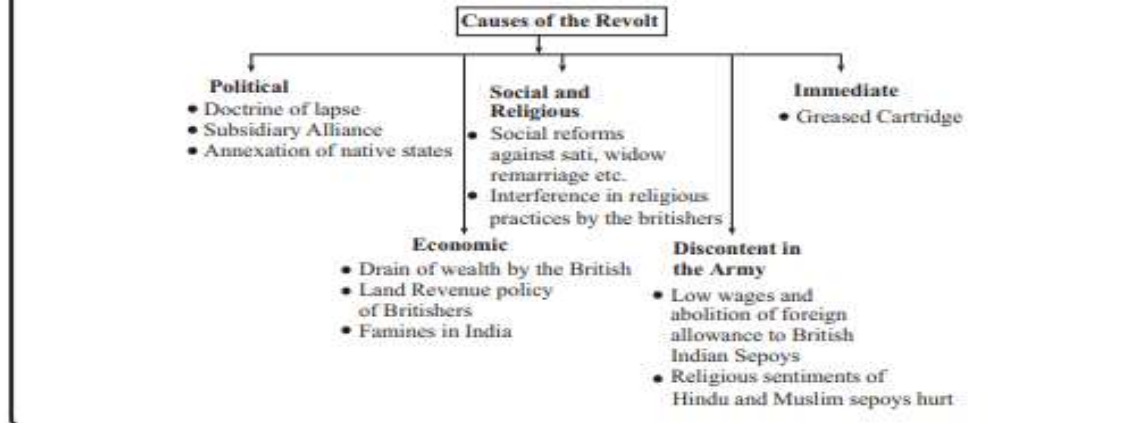
MAJOR UPRISINGS



NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EARLY RESISTANCE



The Revolt 1857



Course of the Revolt

- A sepoy called Mangal Pandey was the first soldier who openly disobeyed orders.
- At Meerut where 85 sepoys of the cavalry regiment were sentenced to 2-10 years imprisonment for refusing to use greased cartridges.
- The very next day, on 10th May 1857, three regiments broke into open mutiny.
- They declared the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah as the emperor of India.
- From Delhi the revolt spread to other places like Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi.

Nature of the Revolt

- A big debate surrounds the revolt of 1857. British historians describe the events of 1857 -1858 as merely a mutiny by the sepoys.
- Some Indian historians tend to call it the First War of Independence.
- The participation of peasants and artisans made the revolt a widespread and popular event. It was also characterised by Hindu-Muslim unity.

Causes of the Failure of the Revolt

- The rebels had limited supply of arms and ammunitions
- Lack of communication and centralized leadership among the rebels.
- The British had sufficient resources and also better arms and equipments
- The rebels did not have clear political agenda for future
- The rebels had failed to enlist the support of merchants, intelligentsia and many local princes that rather supported the British.

Significance of the Revolt

- The British though managed to suppress the revolt but realized the extent of people's resentment.
- Though the efforts of the rebels failed, the British government was pressurised to change their policy towards India.
- British made a declaration that they would no longer expand their existing territorial possessions
- Another important consequence of the Revolt of 1857 was the declaration of Royal Proclamation in 1858.
- Finally, though the rebels failed, their heroic struggle against the British Raj left a deep impression in people's mind

Evaluate yourself

Q. List the major peasant and tribal revolts.

Q. Explain the significance of the Revolt of 1857.

Q. Mention the causes of Revolt of 1857.