

6. People's Resistance against British Before 1857

Civil Uprisings

Introduction:

- There were many incidents before the 1857 revolt that indicated all was not well and that there was a building resentment against the alien rule.
- According to Bipan Chandra, people's resistance took three broad forms: civil rebellions, tribal uprisings and peasant movements.

▪ Causative Factors for People's Uprisings:

- Colonial land revenue settlements, heavy burden of new taxes, eviction of peasants from their lands, and encroachments on tribal lands.
- Exploitation in rural society coupled with the growth of intermediary revenue collectors.
- Expansion of revenue administration over tribal lands leading to the loss of tribal people's hold over agricultural and forest land.
- Promotion of British manufactured goods, heavy duties on Indian industries.
- Destruction of indigenous industry leading to migration of workers from industry to agriculture, increasing the pressure on land/agriculture.

▪ Major Causes of Civil Uprisings:

- Under the Company rule, there were rapid changes in the economy, administration and land revenue system that went against the people.
- Several zamindars and poligars who had lost control over their land and its revenues due to the colonial rule, had personal scores to settle with the new rulers.
- The ego of traditional zamindars and poligars was hurt due to being sidelined in rank by government officials and a new class comprising of merchants and money-lenders.
- The ruin of Indian handicraft industries due to colonial policies impoverished millions of artisans.
- The priestly classes instigated hatred and rebellion against alien rule, because the religious preachers, priests, pundits, maulvis, etc.

▪ Important Civil Uprisings:

Revolt	Description
Sanyasi Revolt (1763-1800)	The disastrous famine of 1770 and the harsh economic order of the British compelled a group of sanyasis in Eastern India to fight the British yoke.
Revolt in Midnapore and Dhalbhum (1766-74)	The English took hold of Midnapore in 1760 and at that time there were about 3,000 zamindars and talukdars having cordial relations with their ryots. But this harmonious scenario changed after the introduction of new land revenue system by the English in 1772. People revolted in resistance
Revolt of Moamarias (1769-99)	The revolt of the Moamarias in 1769 was a potent challenge to the authority of Ahom kings of Assam. The Moamarias were low-caste peasants who followed the teachings of Aniruddhadeva (1553-1624)
Revolt of Raja of Vizianagaram (1794)	In 1758, a treaty was made between the English and Ananda Gajapatiraju, the ruler of Vizianagaram, to jointly oust the French from the Northern Circars.

Civil Rebellion in Awadh (1799)	<p>Wazir Ali Khan, the fourth Nawab of Awadh, with the help of the British, had ascended the throne in September 1797.</p> <p>However, in January 1799, he killed a British resident, Geogre Frederik Cherry, who had invited him to lunch.</p> <p>The whole incident became famous as the Massacre of Benares.</p>
Poligars' Revolt (1795-1805)	<p>The poligars (or palayakkarargal) of South India gave a stiff resistance to the British between 1795 and 1805.</p> <p>Kattabomman Nayakan, the poligar of Panjalankurichi, led the insurrection between 1795 and 1799.</p>
Diwan Velu Thampi's Revolt (1808-1809)	<p>The East India Company's harsh conditions imposed on the state of Travancore, after both of them agreed to a subsidiary alliance arrangement under Wellesley in 1805, caused deep resentment in the region.</p> <p>The ruler was not able to pay the subsidy and fell in arrears.</p> <p>The high-handed attitude of the Company compelled Prime Minister (or Dalawa) Velu Thampi to rise against the Company</p>
Paika Rebellion (1817)	<p>The Paiks of Odisha were the traditional landed militia ('foot soldiers' literally) and enjoyed rent free land tenures for their military service and policing functions on a hereditary basis.</p>
Wahabi Movement	<p>The Wahabi Movement was essentially an Islamic revivalist movement founded by Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly.</p> <p>Syed Ahmed condemned the western influence on Islam and advocated a return to pure Islam</p>
Kuka Movement	<p>The Kuka Movement was founded in 1840 by Bhagat Jawahar Mal in western Punjab.</p> <p>After the British took Punjab, the movement got transformed from a religious purification campaign to a political campaign.</p>

Peasant Movement 1857 to 1947

The impoverishment of the Indian peasantry was a direct result of transformation of agrarian structure due to,

- Colonial Economic Policy.
 - Ruin of handicraft led to overcrowding of land.
 - New land revenue system.
 - Colonial administrative and judicial system.
- The peasants suffered from high rents, illegal levies, arbitrary evictions and unpaid labour.

Peasant movement:

Movements	Features
Indigo revolt 1859-60.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directed against British who forced peasants to sign fraudulent contracts which forced them to grow Indigo even when it was not profitable to them. • Rebellion organized under the leadership of Digambar Biswas & Bishnu Biswas of Nadia district • Peasants were supported by intelligentsia of Bengal • Nildarpan, a play was written by Dinabandhu Mitra based on this agitation. • By 1860, planter closed the factory & Indigo wiped from Bengal • It was the first Satyagraha movement in Modern India
Pabna agrarian leagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zamindar enhanced rent from tenants from acquiring occupancy under act X of 1859. • Forcible eviction of peasant, seizure of cattle & crops and filing litigation against peasant. • Peasant formed agrarian league to resist the demands of the zamindars. • 1885 Bengal tenancy act was passed, major issues were solved, this was supported by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, R C Dutt & Indian association under Surendranath Banerjee.
Deccan riots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the deccan famine in 1875 AD, riots broke out in Ahmednagar and Pune district of Bombay presidency against the exploitation of moneylenders who were Gujaratis, social boycott of outside moneylenders by ryots. • It became armed rebellion under Vasudev Balwant Phadke who is regarded as the 'Father of modern Indian revolutionary terrorism' • The riots ended with Deccan Peasants relief act
The Kisan Sabha movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the 1857 revolt, the Awadh Taluqdar had got back their lands. • Majority of the cultivators were subjected to high rents, arbitrary evictions, Bedakhali. • The Home Rule activists organized Kisan Sabhas in UP

	United Provinces Kisan Sabha	Gauri Shankar Mishra and Indra Narayan Dwivedi
	Awadh Kisan Sabha	Baba Ramchandra
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other prominent leaders were: - Jhinguri Singh, Durgapal Singh In October 1920, the Awadh Kisan Sabha came into existence Kisan Sabha asked kisans to refuse to till bedakhali land and not to offer hari and beggar, to boycott those who did not accept these conditions and solve disputes through panchayats. 	
Eka movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towards the end of 1921, peasant discontent resurfaced in some northern districts of the United Provinces—Hardoi, Bahraich, Sitapur. The meetings of the Eka or the Unity Movement involved a symbolic religious ritual in which the assembled peasants took vows that pay only recorded rent, not leave when evicted, refuse to do forced labour, not help criminals, abide by panchayat decisions. Leadership by Madaripasi. 	
Mappila Revolt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslim cultivator of south Malabar Moplahs were generally taken as Jemis or Janmi (Bonded labour) by Namboodri upper caste Hindu landlords. Mappilas expressed their resentment against the oppression of the landlords. During the period 1836 to 1854 they took 22 Mappila uprisings. 	
Poligars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dindigul Malabar and North Arcot began revolting against the company land revenue system during 1790. Sporadic Poligar uprisings continued in Madras presidency upto 1856. 	
Bardoli Satyagraha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1926 Government decided to increase the land revenue by 30 %, people refused to it. Bardoli Satyagraha Patrika was published to organize movement. Govt. finally settled at rise of 6.03 per cent only. The women of Bardoli gave Vallabhai Patel the title of “Sardar”. 	

▪ **Changed Nature of the Peasant Movement after 1857:**

The peasant movements of the 20th century were deeply influenced by and had a marked

impact on the national freedom struggle.

- Peasants emerged as the main force in agrarian movements, fighting directly for their own demands.
- The demands were centered almost wholly on economic issues.
- The movements were directed against the immediate enemies of the peasant-foreign planters and indigenous zamindars and moneylenders.
- The struggles were directed towards specific and limited objectives and redressal of particular grievances.
- Colonialism was not the target of these movements.
- It was not the objective of these movements to end the system of subordination or exploitation of the peasants.

▪ **The All-India Kisan Congress/Sabha (AIKS):**

- Founded by **Swami Sahjanand Saraswati as the president** and **N.G. Ranga as the general secretary** in **Lucknow, 1936**.
- The **AIKS** and the **Congress** held their sessions in **Faizpur** (first session of congress to be held in a village) in 1936. The Congress manifesto (especially the agrarian policy) for the 1937 provincial elections was strongly influenced by the AIKS agenda.

▪ **Peasant Activity in Provinces:**

States	Activities
Kerala	Peasants mobilised mainly by the Congress Socialist Party activists, “Karshak Sanghams” (peasants’ organisations) came into existence.
Andhra	Many provincial ryot associations were active. The India Peasants’ Institute-N.G. Ranga, 1933.
Punjab	Earlier peasant mobilization here had been organized by the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the Kirti Kisan Party, the Congress and the Akalis. New direction by Punjab Kisan Committee, 1937.

Tribal Movements

▪ **The reasons for the various tribal movements:**

1. British land revenue policy.
2. Forest laws introduced in 1840 which prohibited shifting cultivation, imposed taxes,

banned the custom of sacrifice performed by some tribals.

3. New administrative setup was also being resisted by the tribals.
4. Christian missionary activities in the tribal regions.

▪ **Some Notable Tribal Revolts:**

Chuars (1769)	First to revolt against the British Land Revenue Policy in West Bengal.
Khasis (1828)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It occurred in Assam under leadership of Tiruthsingh. • The cause was against the presence of army in the agency area and also revenue policy.
Kols-Chota Nagpur, 1832	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It occurred under the leadership of BuddhoBhagath against the british policy of expansionism.
Khonds-Orissa, 1846-48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was led by Chakra Besai when Lord Hardinge I banned the custom sacrifice
Kachanga, Assam, 1882	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under leadership of Sambu Dan against british land revenue policy.
Koya, Godavari, AP, 1922-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the leadership of 'Alluri SitaramRaju' against British forest laws • Also against the tribe chieftans called as 'Muthadars'. • It is also known as Rampa rebellion.
Munda, Bihar, 1899-1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revolted under the leadership of BirsaMunda. • It started against Christian missionary activities. • Birsa founded a new cult called Singbonga. • Started 'Sons of the soil' movement called Ulgulan.
Naikdas, Gujarat, 1858-1868	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against British policy of expansionism • Declared the formation of a tribal kingdom. • Led under the leadership of Roop Singh and JariaBhagath.
Santhal rebellion, 1854-56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It took place in Rajmahal hills, Bihar • It opposed British land revenue policy • It was led by Siddhu and Kanhu • They also declared formation of an independent tribal kingdom • This revolt exploded the myth of European invincibility and it also had impact on 1857 sepyo mutiny.

Bhills, 1913	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by Govind guru against british revenue policy.
Chenchu, 1922-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It occurred in Nallamala Hills in Andhra Pradesh. • Revolted against British forest laws • K Hanumanthu led the movement.

▪ **Post War Phase:**

Movements	Features
Tebhaga Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Bengal • Flood commission recommended Tebhaga—two-thirds' share—to the bargardars, the share-croppers also known as bagchasioradhyar, instead of the one-half share. • Main Participants -Rajhasis community and Muslim peasant • The movement dissipated soon-Bargardari Bill, an intensified repression, the popularization of agitation for a separate Bengal & renewed riots in Calcutta.
Telangana Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest peasant guerrilla war of modern Indian history. • Forced exploitation by Deshmukh, Jagirdars, Doras (landlords) in forms of forced labour (Vethi) and illegal exactions of peasants • Andhra Mahasabha had lead local struggles against them. • The uprising began in 1946. • It was suppressed by NizamsRazakars and fizzled out after the Indian security forces took over Hyderabad.

Weaknesses of People's uprising:

- They were localised and occurred at different places at different times
- They mostly arose out of local grievances.
- The leadership was semi-feudal in character, backward-looking, traditional in outlook.
- These rebellions were centuries-old in form and ideological / cultural content.
- The methods and arms used by the fighters in these uprisings were practically obsolete compared to the weapons and strategy used by their opponents.