
Chapter – 05 History

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:**
 - (i) Since the mid-eighteenth century. Nawabs and rajas had seen their power erode. They lost their authority and honour.
 - (ii) In 1801, a subsidiary alliance was imposed on Awadh. The company began to plan to bring an end to the Mughal dynasty.
 - **The Peasants and the Sepoys:**
 - (i) In the countryside peasants and zamindars resented the high taxes and the rigid methods of revenue collection.
 - (ii) The Indian sepoys in the employment of the company were unhappy about their pay, allowances and conditions of service.
 - (iii) Moreover, some new rules violated their religious sensibilities and beliefs.
 - **Responses to Reforms:**
 - (i) The British believed that Indian society had to be reformed.
 - (ii) Laws were passed to stop the practice of Sati and to encourage the remarriage of widows.
 - **Through the Eyes of the People:** The English were determined to wipe out the religions of Hindu and the Muslims.
 - **A Mutiny Becomes a Popular Rebellion:**
 - (i) In May 1857, a massive rebellion started against the company's very presence in India.
 - (ii) Sepoys multined in several places beginning from Meerut and a large number of people from different sections of society rose up in rebellion.
 - **From Meerut to Delhi:**
 - (i) On 29 March 1857, Mangal Pandey, a young soldier was hanged to death for attacking his officers in Barrackpore.
 - (ii) The response of the other Indian soldiers in Meerut was quite extraordinary, they marched to the jail in Meerut and released the imprisoned sepoys.
 - (iii) The sepoys rode all night of 10 May to reach Delhi.
 - (iv) The regiments stationed in Delhi also rose up in rebellion and many British officers were killed, arms and ammunition seized, buildings set on fire.
 - (v) The soldiers forcibly met Bahadur Shah Zafar and proclaimed him as their leader.
 - **The Rebellion Spreads:**
 - (i) 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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- (ii) Regiment after Regiment mutinied and took off to join other troops at nodal points like Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow.
 - (iii) In this rebel Nana Saheb of Kanpur, Birjis Qadr of Lucknow and his mother Begum Hazrat Mahal, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi took as active part in organizing the uprising against the British. Rani Avantibai Lodhi of Ramgarh raised and led the army against the British who had taken over the administration of her state.
 - **The company Fights Back:**
 - (i) Unnerved by the scale of the upheaval, the company decided to repress the revolt with all its might.
 - (ii) Delhi was recaptured from the rebel forces in September 1857.
 - (iii) The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in court and sentenced to life imprisonment. He along his wife was sent to prison in Rangoon.
 - (iv) People continued to resist and battle the British. The British had to fight for two years to suppress the massive forces of popular rebellion.
 - **Aftermath:**
 - (i) 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.
 - (ii) All ruling chiefs of the country were allowed to pass on their kingdoms to their heirs, including the adopted sons.
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