

PEASANT REVOLT POST-1857/EARLY INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT (INM)-

New features in Peasant revolts post 1857-

- a) Greater awareness of British laws & institutions. e.g. – peasants fought court cases + showed better organization.
- b) Western Educated Middle Class (*WEMC) began taking up peasant issues.

INDIGO REVOLT (1859-63)

CONTEXT-

- 1) **1788-** EIC began Indigo plantation by giving loans to 10 European planters in Bengal (**notice preferential benefit to Europeans else Zamindars could also have begun).
- 2) **NIJ cultivation system [Bengal]-** In this system planters bought lands for Indigo cultivation. However, they faced challenge of buying large lands, mobilizing labor, Bullocks & ploughs.
- 3) **Ryoti system (Bengal)-** Leased lands from zamindars (after 1793 Zamindar is big landowner & land became a commodity which could be sold, rented, leased, mortgaged) & signed **contracts** with tenant ryots whereby-
 - a) Ryot must grow Indigo on at least 25% of occupied land.
 - b) Planters gave loans on low rates & then sold Indigo seed & seed drills to ryot.
 - c) Planters purchased the cultivated Indigo.
- 4) **Pre 1857 revolts against Indigo Planters-** Following revolts include the grievance against Indigo Planters:- Revolt by Titu Mir of 24 parganas [1831] + 1830s- Faraizi movement under Dudu Miya in East Bengal.
- 5) **Grievances of Ryots:**
 - a) **Soil Fertility** destroyed by Indigo which reduced their income.

- b) Lack of **remunerative price** for Indigo to ryot.
- c) These two factors led to **continued indebtedness despite low interest loans** by Planter
- d) Ryot was **forced to continue Indigo cultivation** by taking further loans when he could not pay the previous loan. Also he could be removed from lands by Planter (*during lease period Planter is de-facto Zamindar).
- e) **Fall in international prices** of Indigo hurt ryots as now Planter gave even less for purchase of cultivated Indigo. The prices fell as a crisis in financial markets (*Stock Exchange) led to general slowdown in British economy (*as many lost money hence dip in buying power of British).
- f) **Trigger**= sympathetic LG of Bengal asked DCs to take side of ryots in disputes since forced cultivation was against spirit of capitalism/free market economy. [*post of LG(Bengal) created in 1854 to reduce work of GG (India) & Charter 1853 allowed for this]

6) Action

- a) Ryots refused loans + refused to cultivate Indigo + did social boycott of Indian agents of planters (***Non Cooperation/NC before MG**)
- b) Planters went **to court to enforce contracts**
- c) Ryots began **no-rent campaign (*NC before MG)**
- d) Planters tried **eviction of ryots from occupied lands** (*after PS1793 ryot= tenant).
- e) **Ryots went to court** to enforce their occupancy rights under **Rent Act 1859**.
- f) **Role of Western Educated Middle Class (*WEMC)** (*notice spirit of Fraternity which is element of Modern Nationalism):-

- i) **1860- DeenBandhu Mitra's play NEEL DARPAN/** Blue Mirror highlighted oppression of ryots by Indigo planters. This greatly increased awareness.
- ii) Bengali poet **Michael Madhusudhan Datta** translated Neeldarpan into English & **Christian missionary James Long** published it, leading to awareness in England (*Planters filed case of Libel (*maanhaani) against him & he was punished by court).
- iii) **Hindu Patriot [English] & Somprakash [Bengali]** published aggressive editorials in favor of ryots.
- iv) Even **British Indian Association [1851]** an organization of educated zamindars supported Ryots [*they hated planters domination of rural economy]
- v) **Result = Indigo Commission (1860)** that asked ryots to fulfill present contracts but free to not sign future contracts. **By 1863**, Indigo cultivation shifted from Bengal to Bihar where it operated as **Tinkathia system** [*Same as ryoti system but here ryot forced to grow Indigo on 3/20th of occupied land]
- vi) **Champaran Satyagraha (1917)** under Mahatma Gandhi (*MG) led to **Champaran Agrarian Act 1918** that led to decline of Tinkhatia system.

Pabna Agrarian Leagues (1873) in Bengal

1. **Grievance** = Zamindars not respecting occupancy rights provided by Rent Act 1859 + high rents + Illegal Abwabs.
2. Peasants organized themselves into leagues (*organization), pooled money to fight in courts + **Naya Miya** replicated the movement in other districts.
3. **Hindu Patriot** (English) & **Amrita Bazar Patrika** (Bengali & English) supported Zamindars while **Bengalee [English]** of **Surendra Nath Bannerjea (*SNB)** supported ryots. Thus

WEMC got divided. Also **Anglo Indian Press supported Ryots** because it was Indian Landlord under attack. [*Until 1911 Census: **Anglo Indian**= European living in India & Eurasian = British & Indian parents; 1911 Census defined Anglo Indian = mixed descent; European in India when no Indian parent; Eurasian not used anymore]

4. **Result** = Ripon8084 setup **Rent Commission (1880)** that led to **Bengal Tenancy Act 1885-** which gave occupancy rights even to ryots who cultivated different lands in same village continuously for >12 yrs. Act was properly implemented & finally relief for ryots.

Maharashtra

- 1) 1873-74 : No tax campaign against increase in LR
- 2) **1875 Bombay Deccan Riots or simply Deccan Riots (Maharashtra)**
 - a) **Grievance** = high LR under ryotwari + oppression by moneylenders + loss of lands.
 - b) **Background: Limitation Law 1859 in Bombay:** Interest to be applied only for 3 years on loan taken irrespective of when does the ryot pays back. But moneylenders made ryot sign new debt bond after 3 yrs and accumulated interest now treated as part of Principal.
 - c) **Action = Poona Sarvajanik Sabha 1870** (*of MG Ranade) collected 17000 signatures on power of attorneys to represent ryots & successfully convinced govt to declare that confiscation of land to be last resort for LR recovery.
 - d) however, moneylenders now refused loans making ryots incapable of paying LR.
 - e) Now violent revolt began but life of moneylender wasn't attacked & **only debt bonds were burnt.** (* aware of tool of oppression)
 - f) **Result = Deccan Agriculturist Relief Act 1879** - gave protection against loss of land due to indebtedness & regulated interest rates (*after n yrs no interest on interest)

- 3) **1896-97- No Tax campaign** because no remission (*one time decrease) of LR despite crop failure.

Punjab:

1. Kuka Revolt 1871-72

1.1. Led by Namdhari Sect leader **Baba Ram Singh**

1.2. Namdharis:

- 1.2.1. wanted to purify Sikhism via social reforms +
- 1.2.2. believe in living Guru & in Guru Granth Sahib as holy book +
- 1.2.3. in strict equal status to women +
- 1.2.4. No rituals & only chanting of mantras thus name Kuka or reciter +
- 1.2.5. Anti-Priests +
- 1.2.6. Pro Cow Protection

1.3. **Action-** Violence against cow slaughterers, priests and then <> British.

1.4. Baba Ram Singh was exiled to Burma in 1872.

1907- Punjab Canal Colony Agitations:

1. Govt bill

- 1.1. allowed govt to control inheritance of land in canal colonies +
- 1.2. increased water rates & fines for breaking regulations of canal colonies

2. Lahore Indian Association(1878), Arya Samaj (1875), Singh Sabha (1873) organized peasants.

3. Began No tax campaign and later riots broke out.

4. Br repressed but also withdrew bill due to fear of disaffection in army (*post 1857 Sikh dominated army)