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Pre 1857 Peasant & Tribal Revolts + Post 1857 Tribal Revolts

Q- 1857 uprising/revolt was culmination of small & big rebellions in 1st 100 years of the British rule.

(*answer: prove that there was similarity in – Reasons, Goals, Methods, Leadership- in pre 1857 revolts and 1857 revolt)

Q- 1857 revolt was the biggest peasant revolt (* answer is covered in 1857 revolt)

Grievances of Peasants

1) Farming System 1772 in Bengal

- a) Oppression by revenue farmer who extracted high LR
- b) had support of British officials as collected LR under DC's supervision.

2) Permanent Settlement 1793 –

- a) oppression by zamindars via high rents
- b) illegal abwabs
- c) lack of occupancy rights or forced evictions
- d) British officials & British courts which supported the Zamindar as all rights in land legally with Zamindars
- e) Ineffective implementation of Rent Act 1859 in Bengal leading to lack of respect for occupancy rights of ryots (*who cultivated a piece of land continuously for >12 yrs)

3) Ryotwari & Mahalwari –

- a) oppression of high LR by British government + loss of land in auction by government;
- b) indebtedness to money lenders & high interest rate on loans & then loss of land to moneylenders on default on loans i.e due to indebtedness.

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4) Contract Farming

- a) oppression by indigo planters in Bengal until 1860 & later Bihar until 1918 - they forced ryots to cultivate indigo on part of their occupied land
- b) forced to take loans from planter
- c) were not given right price for indigo cultivated leading to continued indebtedness to planter
- d) soil productivity hurt
- e) oppression by Indian agents of planter, Br officials & courts if ryot refused to cultivate indigo.

5) ROLE OF RELIGION (esp pre 1857 revolts)

- a) Grievance that religion under threat due to
 - i) Conversions by Christian missionaries.
 - ii) Britishers ending revenue free or rent-free tenures on lands of religious sects & institutions i.e temples/mosques
 - iii) Social reforms by law e.g. Sati Abolition Act 1829, Lex Loci Act 1850 (* gave Right of inheritance even after conversion), Hindu Widow Remarriages Act 1856.
- b) Religion helped in giving organization especially when a Sect revolted i.e. a leader, who did planning, coordination & unity (*BJP, Congress, AIMIM, RSS etc are modern organizations – absent pre 1857 therefore their work was done by Religion)

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Grievances of Tribals

- 1) two special aspects of Tribals
 - a) Tribal autonomy(*in civil & criminal matters)
 - b) Lived in forests/Hills away from mainstream society of plains.
- 2) Agrarian order/life was turned upside down by outsiders i.e.
 - a) British government & officials, British laws, British LR systems, British businesses & Christian Missionaries
 - b) Zamindars from plains, Revenue Farmers, Merchants & Money lenders
- 3) Primary concern of British was extraction of LR therefore
 - a) zamindars of plains were made owners of tribal areas/forest land +
 - b) Land was farmed out to Revenue farmers i.e. LR collection auctioned off to highest bidder +
 - c) In some cases, tribal chief was recognized as zamindar & in some cases tribal ryots were made landowners.
- 4) Due to high LR, there was influx of moneylenders and consequent indebtedness & loss of lands
- 5) Hence there was grievance of loss of land to outsiders, i.e. zamindars, merchants, moneylenders, British government + high rents, high LR, indebtedness.
- 6) Also autonomy of tribal chiefs & tribals hurt due to application of British law in civil & criminal matters.
 - a) Example, British law **banned JHUM cultivation/slash & burn/Shifting cultivation & banned hunting** – because Br wanted settled peasant communities paying LR regularly. **Chenchus of Hyd** became nearly extinct.

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7) Loss of home for tribals due to **Indian Forests Act 1878** that categorized forest into –

- a) reserved forests - no access to tribals,
- b) protected forests - tribals can use forest produce but only for personal consumption & not for sale.
- c) Uncategorized which were open to all.

8) Loss of home due to land acquisition by Govt for rail-road projects, mining & for forest produce e.g. timber (*used in railways, ships etc). Also, tribals were made to do forced labor on these projects. Thus they lost their **forest lands & right to forest produce (*today Forests Rights Act 2006)**.

9) Entry of Christian missionaries post 1813, led to religious interference.

Sample Intro for questions on Pre 1857 revolts:

1. Western educated middle class (*WEMC) responded to British rule in form of socio religious reforms. They believed in benevolence of British rule i.e. British will modernize India + they benefited from British rule by jobs created by British rule.
2. INM leaders called pre-1857 revolts as **"pre-history of modern nationalism"**
3. It was the tribals & peasants who 1st responded to Br rule with defiance & often violently.

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Peasant revolts- of two kinds

big Zs of Awadh



1. **Civil Uprising** – where Leadership of elites i.e. Raja or talukdar/zamindar (*like 1857 revolt)
2. **Peasant Revolts**- where leadership of peasants

CIVIL UPRISINGS

- 1) **(1778-81) - Raja Chait Singh of Benaras** (was Zamindar) (Big Zamindars kept own military, own forts & were regarded as Raja by people) revolted as his estates taken away due to non-payment of LR (*Benaras annexed by EIC in Treaty of Faizabad 1775 + later PS1793 in Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, North Madras, Benaras)
- 2) **1799-** deposed **Nawab Wazir Ali** (1797-98) revolted in Awadh with peasant support.
- 3) Post 2nd Anglo Maratha War **(1803-05)-** Interference by Br resident post SA led to revolt by **Bundela chiefs** with peasant support.
- 4) 1799-1805: **Poligars** who were traditionally autonomous revolted against the British due to-
 - a) loss of status due to British Rule of Law & equality before law (*like loss of status of taluqdars in 1857 revolt)
 - b) Ryotwari settlement led to loss of lands for Poligars (*like Mahalwari leading to loss of estates for Taluqdars in 1857 revolt)
 - c) high LR demand on peasants led to their participation.
- 5) 1809- **Dewan Veluthampi** of Travancore revolted with Nair troops & peasants due to interference by British resident after SA of 1805.

Peasant Revolts led by Peasants

1) 1783- Rangpur rebellion in North Bengal

- a) Grievance= oppression by revenue farmers/contractors under Farming System 1772 & corruption of British officials who supported them. Since Great Bengal famine 1770 peasants were already under economic stress.
- b) Action= Targeted revenue farmers Debi Singh & Gobinda Singh- by looting their grain stores.
- c) Attacked prison & released ryots + attacked local courts. Therefore peasants were clearly aware of tools of their oppression.
- d) For some time ran their own government by using money from self-imposed taxes.
- e) Result= crushed by EIC.

2) Mysore 1830-31

- a) grievance = High LR under Wodeyar Dynasty since 1799 (*to pay high subsidy under SA1799)
- b) Peasants revolted <> Wodeyar Dynasty & British agents.
- c) Result= EIC crushed the revolt (* responsibility under SA 1799).

RELIGION PLAYED IMPORTANT ROLE IN FOLLOWING –

1) [1760-1850s] Sanyasi & Fakir Rebellion in north Bengal & Bihar –

- a) Peak in 1800 - 50,000 members were participating
- b) These were religious sects.
- c) **Dasnami sanyasis** included peasants & small traders.

Grievance: After 1857 Britishers started interfering in domestic trade of India through Gomastas.

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- d) Grievance = high LR + high rents (*post 1793) + monopoly of EIC agents over domestic trade of Bengal (*recall Qasim6063 ending internal duties before BoBuxar1764)
- e) **Madari Fakirs** included peasants who traditionally enjoyed revenue/rent free tenures which were now ended by EIC.
- f) Both groups had good relations due to similar religious philosophies.
- g) Result= finally crushed by British.

2) (1823-33) ^(a religious sect) **Pagal Panthis Revolt in East Bengal**

- a) Leaders of this sect were Karim Shah & Tipu Shah.
- b) Grievance <> Zamindars (* high rents + illegal abwabs+ lack of occupancy rights).
- c) Tipu Shah promised lower rents post victory over Zamindars & British.
- d) Result= crushed by EIC

3) 1831-Titu Mir of 24 Parganas

- a) Belonged to **Wahabi sect** ^{→ sect of islam} & taught teachings of Shah Waliullah of Delhi.
- b) Followers of Titu were poor peasants & they also followed a distinct identity i.e. a unique beard & dress.
- c) Grievance <> Tax on beard, **indigo** planters, zamindars & British officials
- d) Result = setup their own government, self-imposed taxes but finally crushed by EIC army.

4) 1830s (*then in 1870s) Faraizi Movement 1830s in Bengal

- a) Led by father-son duo Haji Shariatullah & Dudu Mian (*in 1870s Naya Mian)

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- b)** The sect believed in philosophy that Quran is the only true book of Islam & wanted to remove all un-Islamic beliefs & therefore purify Islam by going back to golden past.
- c)** Grievance <> **indigo planters**, zamindars & British officials.
- d)** Action= Dudu Miya declared that land belongs to God therefore tax/rent on land is un-godly (* catchy slogan). They set up their own government, self-imposed taxes & set up own courts.
- e)** Result = crushed (*Hunter in his book Indian Muslims argued that neglect of Muslims led to Faraizi movt therefore Br should favor muslims for political stability)

5) Moplah/Mopilla revolt in Malabar 1840 (*in 1870s, 1921)

- a)** Moplah = Muslim ryot of Malabar.
- b)** Janmies= members of brahmin princely families who were traditionally big landlords + there were supervisors who collected LR on behalf of janmies.
- c)** Traditionally earnings were shared b/w all 3 sections therefore all 3 enjoyed traditional rights in land.
- d)** 1789-92: Malabar annexed by EIC after 3rd Anglo Mysore war
- e)** Grievance= EIC LR system recognized Janmies as legal landowners & now Moplahs lost all traditional rights & were oppressed by Janmies (**orientalists believed that Lord Parshuram gave all lands to janmies)
- f)** Moplahs revolted violently & revolt took communal color as oppressor & oppressed had different religious identity.
- g)** Result= crushed by EIC army.

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TRIBAL UPRISING (PRE-1857)

1) Kol Uprising 1831-32

- a) In Chhota Nagpur & Singhbhum regions of Bihar & Odisha.
- b) Grievance= tribal autonomy hurt by British rule + oppression by outsiders/**Suds** when Raja of Chhotangapur farmed out lands to merchants & moneylenders. Therefore, loss of customary land rights for tribals.
- c) Action= Kols targeted the property of Suds & not their life.
- d) Result= army crushed it.

2) Kandh uprising 1837-56 in Bihar led by Chakra Basoi.

- a) Grievance = ban on human sacrifice

3) Khasi Uprising 1833 led by Tirath singh

- a) Grievance = loss of lands due to **Brahmaputra Valley-Sylhet Road** & also inflow of outsiders i.e. British businesses, their Indian agents & British officials
- b) Result- crushed

4) Santhal Hool/rebellion 1855-56

- a) In Rajmahal hills (Jharkhand)
- b) Grievance = loss of their fatherland or Damini-i-koh to outsiders/Dikus. British gave tribal lands to non-Santhal zamindars & money lenders + rail road construction also led to loss of lands.
- c) Action =
 - i) Led by **Sido** Murmu & **Kanhu** Murmu

- ii) Santhals gave prior warning in 1855 to British & then revolted <> Unholy trinity of British/zamindars/moneylenders with bows & arrows to win back their fatherland from Dikus
- iii) British rule collapsed.
- iv) British took violent revenge & they burned villages killing 50000 Santhals therefore crushing the revolt.
- v) However, a separate administrative unit Santhal Parganas with protection to tribal culture & identity was created.

CHARACTER OF PRE 1857 REVOLTS

[**concept begins**]

Modern Nation is summation of Ppl who feel – One (*Unity/Fraternity), Equal (*Equality), Supreme (*Liberty). FR1789 slogan= Liberty Equality Fraternity.

+Modern Nationalism is based on above idea of Nation and Nation is Supreme & National Interest is supreme and Modern Politics (elaborated below as a concept). Hence modern nation has following features:**

1. In Politics
 - a. Democracy & Republicanism,
 - b. Fundamental Rights
 - c. No Taxation Without Representation (NTWR)
 - d. Equality before law
2. In Economy
 - a. Capitalism i.e. democracy in economy
 - b. Security of Property

- c. No concentration of wealth on basis of birth or due to **Crony**

Capitalism



Crony capitalism refers to an economic system in which businesses thrive not because of their efficiency, innovation, or competitiveness, but because of their close relationships with government officials or policymakers. In such a system, success is often based on favoritism rather than market dynamics.

3. In Society

- a. No Birth based Privileges or Discrimination
- b. Indian 1st & anything else later
- c. No oppression of any section

****Modern Politics** involves

1. United Leadership
2. Clear Ideology & Goal
3. Plan (long term) & Programme (short term)
4. Mouthpiece (*website, newspaper) to give voice to Ideology, Goal, Plan, Programme & to give directions and justify demands & actions.
5. Organizational Structure so Directions given by leadership are followed effectively by each follower on ground. ***concept ends***]

CHARACTER OF PRE 1857 REVOLTS:

1) Modern nationalism was missing as

- a) they were not all India movements [*unity]
- b) no-coordination with each other [*unity, org]
- c) no outside leaders & only local leaders [*unity, Indian 1st & anything else later]
- d) lacked proper planning [*org]
- e) goal was not democracy [*Nation supreme]

2) However, called pre-history of modern nationalism –

- a) They were political in nature & not apolitical.
- b) a political movement has ideology, organization & programme.
- c) **Ideology** was there as they wanted to bring back the moral order disturbed by British rule. Therefore, anger <> foreign rule was there. (**thus different vocab than modern political vocab of rights, democracy, colonialism, NTWR etc otherwise immoral rule implies oppression, lack of economic & political & cultural rights*)
- d) **Political symbolism** was there in form of grand marches, idea of fatherland of Santhals'. [**modern politics, org*]
- e) **Unity & Organisation-**
 - i) Religion based bonds provided unity, organization & leadership esp where a Sect revolted.
 - ii) **Organization** was evident as in many cases they set up their own government, own courts & collected own taxes
- f) **Programme** was there as meetings were held & some planning was done
- g) Peasants & tribals were clearly **aware of tool of their oppression** [**clear goal*]
 - i) Eg – they didn't not attack life of oppressors in many cases but their property, account books etc.
 - ii) Santhals declared that traditionally they have hunted game/animals & now they hunt their oppressors.

- h)** Crimes are done secretly while Politics is public & their revolts were public
e.g., public meetings; Santhals gave prior warning in 1855.

POST 1857 TRIBAL UPRISINGS

1) Munda Ulugulan/ uprising 1899-1900

- a)** In Chhota Nagpur, leader Birsa Munda
- b)** Grievances – loss of lands to outsiders + Oppression by br officials + missionary activities of Christian missionaries
- c)** Action –people came to believe in supernatural powers of Birsa e.g. his magical healing powers & that bullets turn to water when fired at Birsa. Therefore, religion in this case gave courage to tribals to rise against mighty British.
- d)** Political symbolism was present as Munda revolted on Christmas of 1899.
- e)** Result = crushed by Britishers.

2) RAMPA REBELLION/FITURI (In Rama hills of Andra)

- a)** Grievance=
 - i)** commercial exploitation of forests
 - ii)** Land acquisition for road construction
 - iii)** loss of lands to moneylenders & merchants
 - iv)** prohibition on Podu i.e. shifting cultivation
 - v)** restriction on use of forest resources
 - vi)** tax on toddy (local drink).
- b)** Action = Fituri/rebellion under leadership of Muttadars who were local estate holders (*like poligars/taluqdars).

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- c) Result = crushed by 1880. In 1920 their movement merged into MG's NCM. Eg. violated forest laws in Andhra. Post NCM, **Alluri Sitarama Raju** who had led Gandhian struggle revolted violently as he believed that India can be liberated only by force therefore re-initiated fight. Was captured & executed in 1924.

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