

Chapter – 5: When People rebel

Policies and the People

- Previous chapters – policies – East India Company – effect – different – people – kings, queens, peasants, landlords, tribals, soldiers – all affected
- People – resist policies – harm interests – against sentiments

Nawabs lose their power

- Mid-18th century – nawabs / rajas – lost – power, authority and honour
- Residents in courts – freedom of rulers reduced – armed forces disabled – revenues and territories – taken away
- Ruling families – negotiate with Company
 - Rani Lakshmi Bai- Jhansi – waned – Company – recognize – adopted son – heir to the kingdom – after death of husband
 - Nana Saheb – adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II – pleaded – father's pension – given to him
- Company – confident – superiority – turned down requests
- Awadh – one of the last – annexed
- 1801 – subsidiary alliance – imposed – 1856 – annexed – Governor-General Dalhousie – declared – territory – misgoverned – British rule – required
- Company – planned – end Mughal dynasty
 - Name of Mughal King – removed from coins – Company minted (created)
 - 1849 – Governor-General Dalhousie – announced – after death of Bahadur Shah Zafar – family – move out of Red Fort – live in another place
 - 1856 – Governor-General Canning – decided – Bahadur Shah Zafar – last king – descendants – called princes

The peasants and the sepoys

- Countryside – peasants and zamindars – angry – high taxes – harsh methods – revenue collection
- Many – failed to pay loans to moneylenders – lost their lands
- Indian sepoys in Company – discontent (not satisfied) – pay, allowances and conditions of service
- Some new rules – violated – religious beliefs
- Those days – believed – if you cross sea – you lose your religion and caste
- 1824 – sepoys were ordered – go Burma – sea route – they refused – agree to go by land route – highly punished – even then – issue did not resolve
- 1856 – Company passed – new law – new sepoys – agree – work overseas – if required
- Sepoys – also angry – situation – countryside
- Many – peasant family – village – anger of peasant – spread through – sepoys

Responses to reforms

- British – believed – Indian society – reformed (changed)
- Laws passed – stop sati – encourage widow-remarriage
- English education – promoted
- 1830 – company allowed – missionaries – function freely – own land and property
- 1850 – new law – conversion to Christianity – made easier
 - Indian – converted to Christianity – inherit ancestor's property

- Many Indians – believed – British – destroying their religion, tradition and culture

Through the Eyes of the People

- Glimpse of what people thought
- Source 1 –
 - List of eighty-four rules
 - Excerpts (short part of book) – *Majha Pravaas* by Vishnubhatt Godse – Brahman from Maharashtra
 - He and his uncle – journey to Mathura – for *yajna* – met some sepoy – advised – not to continue
 - Sepoys said –
 - English – set to – destroy religion – Hindus and Muslims
 - List of eighty-four rules – announced – gathering of kings – Calcutta
 - Kings – refused to accept – warned English – consequences – massive change – if implemented
 - Kings – returned in anger – big people – make plan
 - Date fixed – war of religion – secret plan – spread – letters – from Meerut cantonment to other cantonments
- Source 2 –
 - There was soon excitement in every regiment
 - Memoirs (autobiography) – Subedar Sitaram Pandey – 1812 – sepoy – Bengal Native Army
 - Served English – 48 years – retired in 1860
 - Helped British – control – rebellion – his son – rebel – died in front of him
 - On retirement – Norgate – commanding officer – persuaded him – write memoirs
 - Completed writing in Awadhi – 1861 – Norgate translated to English – name *From Sepoy to Subedar*
 - Excerpts from memoirs –
 - Seizing of Oudh (Awadh) – filled – Sepoys with distrust and led them to rebel
 - Agents – Nawab of Oudh and king of Delhi – sent all over India – check temper of army
 - Worked with feelings of sepoy – telling them – foreigner – treacherous (dangerous) – towards the king
 - Invented lies – persuade soldiers – mutiny – against English – objective – restore Emperor of Delhi
 - Maintain lie – within army's powers – act together – do as advised
 - Accidently – British sent – groups of men – demonstrate use of new rifle
 - These men – performed new drill – some time – report leaked – cartridges for new rifle – greased with fat of cows and pigs
 - Men from our regiment – wrote to other in the same regiment – telling them about this
 - Soon – excitement in every regiment

- Some men – pointed – 40 years of service – nothing done by Sarkar (government) – insult their religion – BUT – sepoys’ minds – influenced by seizure of Oudh
- Interested parties – point out – British – aim – convert to Christians – introduce cartridges – both Hindus and Mahommedans (Muslims) – defiled (impure) by using it
- Colonel Sahib – opinion – excitement – pass off (vanish) – recommended to go home

A Mutiny Becomes a Popular Rebellion

- Struggles between – king and his pupils – common – sometimes – become widespread – popular resistance – power of state – break down
- Large number of people – believed – common enemy – rise against it – same time
- Such situation – people – organize, communicate, display confidence – turn situation around
- Such situation – northern parts of India – 1857
- 100 years of conquest – English East India Company – faced huge rebellion – started – may 1857 – threatened Company’s presence in India
- Sepoys – mutinied – different places – starting from Meerut – large number of people – different sections of society – came together
- Some feel – biggest armed rebellion against colonialization – 19th century

From Meerut to Delhi

- 8 April 1857 – young soldier – Mangal Pandey – hanged – attacking his officers – Barrackpore
- 9 May 1857 – some sepoys – refused – army drill – new cartridges – fat of cows and pigs
- 85 – sepoys – dismissed – sentenced – 10 years of jail
- Response – other Indian soldiers – Meerut – 10 May – marched to jail – released – imprisoned sepoys – killed British officers – captured guns and ammunition – set fire to buildings – declared war – against *firangis*
- Soldiers – wanted – end of rule – who would rule then – Bahadur Shah Zafar
- Sepoys – Meerut – rode all night – 10 May – reach Delhi – early hours
- News spread – regiments – Delhi – joined rebellion – killed British officers – captured guns and ammunition – set fire to buildings
- Triumphant soldiers – gathered around Red Fort – demand – meet – emperor
- Emperor – not ready – challenge – British power – soldiers insisted – forced their way inside – chose Bahadur Shah Zafar – leader
- Ageing emperor – accept demand – wrote letters to – chiefs and rulers – come together – create confederacy (alliance) – fight British – single step – great implications (results)
- Mughal dynasty – ruled – lots of parts in India – smaller rulers and chieftains – controlled smaller territories – feel – if Mughal emperor rule again – they also rule again
- British – not expected this – thought – issue of cartridge – slow down – BUT – Bahadur Shah Zafar’s support – changed situation

The rebellion spreads

- British – defeated in Delhi – no uprising for a week – news travel – takes time – then spurt (series) of mutinies

- Regiment after regiment – mutinied – join troops – nodal points – Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur
- People from towns and villages – joined rebellion – rallied with – local leaders, zamindars, chiefs – fight British
- Nana Saheb – adopted son of late Peshwa Baji Rao – Kanpur – gathered forces – throw out British from Kanpur – declared himself – Peshwa and Governor under Bahadur Shah Zafar
- Lucknow – Birjis Qadr – adopted son of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah – new Nawab – his mother – Begum Hazrat Mahal – active part in rebellion – accepted – Bahadur Shah Zafar
- Jhansi – Rani Lakshmi Bai – joined rebel sepoys – fought against British with – Tantia Tope – General of Nana Saheb
- Mandla region – Madhya Pradesh – Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi – Ramgarh – army of 4000 – against British
- British – outnumbered – defeated in many battles – convinced people – British rule – collapsed – joined the rebellion
- Widespread rebellion – Awadh
- 6 August 1857 – telegram by Lieutenant Colonel Tytler to Commander-in-Chief – expressing fear – our men fear – numbers opposed and endless fighting – every village – against us – zamindars – risen – oppose us
- Many new leaders –
 - Ahmadullah Shah – maulvi – faizabad – predicted – rule of British – end soon – huge support – came to Lucknow – fight British
 - Delhi – large number of *ghazis* (religious warriors) – wipe out white people
 - Bakht Khan – soldier – Bareilly – led a huge army – came to Delhi – became – key military leader in rebellion
 - Bihar – old zamindar – Kunwar Singh – joined rebel sepoys – battled British – many months

The Company Fights Back

- Nervous by rebellion – Company decided – control with all power
- Called reinforcements from England – passed new laws – convict rebels easily – moved into centers of rebellion
- Delhi – recaptured – September 1857
- Last Mughal emperor – Bahadur Shah Zafar – tried in court – life imprisonment – with his wife (Begum Zinat Mahal) – sent to jail – Rangoon – October 1858 – Zafar – died – November 1862
- Recapture of Delhi – did not control rebellion – British – fight for 2 years – control rebellion
- Lucknow – taken in March 1858 – Rani Lakshmi Bai – defeated and killed in June 1858
- Rani Avanti Bai – won in Kheri – killed herself – surrounded by British
- Tantia Tope – escaped to jungles – continued – guerrilla war – support of tribals and peasants – captured, tried and killed – April 1859
- Victories against British – encourage rebellion – loss of rebel forces – discouraged rebellion
- British – announced rewards – loyal landholders
- Those – rebelled before – BUT – surrendered now – AND – not killed any white people – remain safe
- Anyways – hundreds of sepoys, rebels, nawabs and rajas – tried and hanged

Aftermath

- British – regained controlled – end of 1859 – cannot continue ruling – same policies as before
- Imp. changes – introduced by British –
 - British Parliament – new Act – 1858 – transferred power from East India Company to British Crown – member – British Cabinet – Secretary of State – India – responsible – all matters – governance of India – council – advise him – Indian Council – Governor-General – new title – Viceroy – British government – direct rule over India
 - Ruling chiefs – ensured – territory – not annexed ever in future – allowed to pass kingdom to heirs – including adopted sons – British Queen – paramount (supreme) – Indian rulers – kingdoms – sub-ordinates of British Crown
 - Army – Indian soldiers – reduced – European soldiers – increased – no soldiers from Awadh, Bihar, Central or South India – instead – more soldiers from Gurkhas, Sikhs and Pathans
 - Land and property – Muslims – confiscated – large scale – suspected – British – believed – responsible for rebellion
 - British – decided – respect religious practices of people in India
 - Policies – protect landlords and zamindars – ensure – rights over lands
- New phase of history – after 1857

