

CHAPTER 13

Civil Rebellions and Tribal Uprisings-1757-1900

The special status of Jammu and Kashmir

- Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which implied to the State of Jammu & Kashmir.

The problem now was two-folds,

- (i) of transforming the states into viable administrative
- (ii) of absorbing them into the constitutional units.

This was sought to be solved by

1. incorporating smaller states (216 such states) into contiguous provinces and listed in Part A. For instance, 39 states of Orissa and Chhattisgarh were incorporated into Central Provinces, Orissa. Gujarat states were incorporated into Bombay;
2. making some states as centrally administered for strategic or special reasons, listed in Part-C (61 states)—Himachal Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Bhopal, etc.;
3. creating five unions—United States of Kathiawar, United States of Matsya, Patiala and East Punjab States Union, Rajasthan and United States of Travancore-Cochin (later Kerala).

- Initially these states acceded with respect to defence, communication, external affairs; later they felt that a closer association was necessary.
- The five unions and Mysore accepted Indian jurisdiction in Union, concurrent subjects except taxation and subject to differences as under Article 238 and the supervisory power of Union for ten years.
- The Seventh Amendment (1956) abolished Part-B states as a class, and formed one class out of Parts A and B; thus special provisions relating to Part B states were deleted.
- 'The Indian states thus lost their identity and became part of one uniform political set-up.

BENGAL AND EASTERN INDIA

The Sanyasi Revolt,

- The coming of the British brought with it economic hardships symbolised by the massive famine of 1770, and a general callousness on the part of the Company's stooges.
- The restrictions imposed on visits to holy places estranged the sanyasis.
- The sanyasis retaliated by organising raids on the Company's factories and state treasuries.
- Only of er prolonged military action could Warren Hastings contain the raids by the sanyasis.
- Chuar Uprising Famine, enhanced land revenue demands and economic distress goaded the Chuar aboriginal tribesmen of Midnapore district to take up arms.
- The uprising lasted from 1766 to 1772 and then, again surfaced between 1795 and 1816.

Ho Rising

- The Ho and Munda tribesmen of Chhotanagpur challenged the

Company's forces in 1820-22, 'then again in 1831, and the area remained disturbed till 1837.

Kol Mutiny (1831)

- The trouble started with large-scale transfers of land from Kol headmen (Mundas) to outsiders like Sikh and Muslim farmers.
- The Kols of Chhotanagpur resented this and in 1831, the Kol rebels killed or burnt about a thousand outsiders.
- Only after large-scale military operations could order be restored.

Kandh Uprising (1837-56)

- This covered Ghumsar, Chinaki-Medi, Kalahandi and Patna.
- The Kandhs retaliated under Chakra Bisoi against the British efforts to put an end to the Kandh's practice of human sacrifice (mariah) first through persuasion and later through force.
- The Kandhs fought with tangis—a sort of battle axe—bows and arrows and even swords.

Santhal Rising

- The Santhals of Rajmahal Hills resented the oppression by revenue officials, police, money-lenders, landlords—in general, by the "outsiders" (whom they called diku).
- The Santhals under Sido and Kanhu rose up against their oppressors, declared the end of the Company's rule and asserted themselves independent in 1854.
- It was only in 1856 after extensive military operations that the situation was brought under control. Sido died in 1855, while Kanhu was arrested in 1866.
- A separate district of Santhal Pargana was created by the Government to pacify the Santhals.

Ahom Revolt

- The British had pledged to withdraw after the First Burma War (1824-26) from Assam.
- But, after the war, instead of withdrawing, the British attempted to incorporate the Ahoms' territories in the Company's dominion.
- This sparked off a rebellion in 1828 under the leadership of Gomdhar Konwar.
- Finally, the Company decided to follow a conciliatory policy and handed over Upper Assam to Maharaja Purandar Singh Narendra and part of the kingdom was restored to the Assamese king.

Khasi Uprising

- After having occupied the hilly region between Garo and Jaintia Hills, the East India Company wanted to build a road linking the Brahmaputra Valley with Sylhet.
- For this, a large number of outsiders including Englishmen, Bengalis and the labourers from the plains were brought to these regions.
- The Khasis, Garos, Khamptis and the Singhpos organised themselves under to drive away the strangers from the plains.
- The uprising developed into a popular revolt against British rule

- in the area.
- By 1833, the superior English military force had suppressed the revolt.
 - Pagal PanthisKaram Shah was the founder of the Pagal Panth—a semi-religious sect having influence in the northern districts of Bengal. Adherents of a syncretic mixture of Hinduism, Sufism and Animism, the order sought to uphold religious principles and the rights of landless peasants in Bengal; under the leadership of Tipu Shah, the movement soon evolved into a popular, armed struggle against British Raj and the zamindar (landlord) system. It was crushed with the help of the army in 1833.
 - In contrast to the rest of Bengal, the region was inhabited mainly by tribal peoples such as the Garos, Hajangs, Dalus, Hudis and Rajvangshies, who were mainly adherents of Animism and tribal faiths. The philosophy and teachings of Karim Shah were a syncretism of Sufism, Hindu philosophy and local customs, traditions and beliefs. The religious order gained popularity amongst the native peoples and brought together a diverse collection of tribes, Muslims, Hindus and Animists. The order preached monotheism, human equality, non-violence and encouraged the people to overcome social and religious differences and avoid conflicts and dogma. Karim Shah and his followers addressed each other as "Bhaisaheb" (brother) to promote equality and brotherhood. Karim Shah himself was popularly believed to possess spiritual powers enabling him to foretell events, cure diseases and heal people.
 - An activist fervour to the sect was imparted by Tipu, the son and successor of Karam Shah.
 - Tipu was motivated by both religious and political motives and took up the cause of the tenants against the oppression of the zamindars.
 - Tipu captured Sherpur in 1825 and assumed royal power.
 - The insurgents extended their activities to Garo Hills.
 - The area remained disturbed in the 1830s and 1840s.

Faraizi Revolt

- The Faraizis were the followers of a Muslim sect founded by Haji Shariat-Allah of Faridpur in Eastern Bengal.
- They advocated radical religious, social and political changes.
- Shariat-Allah son Dadu Mian (1819-60) organised his followers with an aim to expel the English intruders from Bengal.
- The sect also supported the cause of the tenants against the zamindars.
- The Faraizi disturbances continued from 1838 to 1857.
- Most of the Faraizis joined the Wahabi ranks.

Munda Revolt

- For over three decades, the Munda sardars of Chhotanagpur had been struggling against the destruction of their system of common land-holdings by the intrusion of jagirdars, thikadars (revenue farmers) and tradersmoneylenders. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Mundas rose under Birsa Munda in a religious movement or rebellion ("ulgulan") with an agrarian and political

content.

- They aimed to establish a Munda rule in the land by killing thikadars, jagirdars, rajas and halcims.
- To bring about the liberation, Birsa gathered a force of 6,000 Mundas armed with swords, spears, battle-axes, and bows and arrows.
- Birsa was, however, captured in 1900 and he died in jail the same year.

WESTERN INDIA

Bhil Uprisings,

- The Bhils, an aboriginal tribe concentrated around Khandesh, revolted against their new masters, the East India Company, fearing agrarian hardships and the worst under the new regime.
- One of their leaders was Sewaram.
- This uprising took place in Khandesh region of Maharashtra under the leadership of Sewaram due to the agrarian hardships. The trouble again erupted in 1825, 1831 & 1846.

Cutch Rebellion

- The British interfered in the internal feuds of the Cutch and, in 1819, defeated and deposed the Cutch ruler Rao Bharamal in favour of his infant.
- A British resident governed the areas as the de facto ruler with the help of a regency council.
- The administrative innovations made by the regency council coupled with excessive land assessment caused deep resentment.
- The news of the British reverses in the Burma War emboldened the chiefs to rise in revolt and demand the restoration of Bharamal.
- After extensive military operations failed to control the situation, the Company's authorities were compelled to follow a conciliatory policy.

Waghera Rising,

- A resentment against the alien rule coupled with the exactions of the Gaekwar of Baroda supported by the British Government compelled the Waghera chiefs of Okha Mandal to take up arms.
- The Wagheras carried out inroads into British territory during 1818-19.
- A peace treaty was signed in November 1820.

Koli Risings,

- The Kolis living in the neighbourhood of Bhils rose up in rebellion against the Company's rule in 1829, 1839 and again during 1844-48.
- They resented the imposition of Company's rule which brought with it large-scale unemployment for them and the dismantling of their forts.

Ramosi Risings,

- The Ramosis, the hill tribes of the Western Ghats, had not reconciled to British rule and the British pattern of administration.
- They rose under Chittur Singh in 1822 and plundered the country around Satara. Again, there were eruptions in 1825-26 and the

disturbances continued till 1829.

- The disturbance occurred again in 1839 over deposition and removal of Raja Pratap Singh of Satara, and disturbances continued till 1840-41 also.
- Finally, a superior British force restored order in the area.

Surat Salt Agitations

- A strong anti-British sentiment in attacks by local Surat population on the Europeans 1844 over the issue of the Government's step to raise the salt duty from 50 paise to one rupee.
- Faced with a popular movement, the Government withdrew the additional salt levy. And, again in 1848, the Government was forced to withdraw its measure to introduce Bengal Standard Weights and Measures in face of people's determined bid to resort to boycott and passive resistance.

Kolhapur and Savantvadi Revolts

- The Gadkaris were a hereditary military class which was garrisoned in the Maratha forts.
- These garrisons were disbanded during administrative reorganisation in Kolhapur state after 1844.
- Facing the spectre of unemployment, the Gadkaris rose in revolt and occupied the Samangarh and Bhudargarh forts.
- Similarly, the simmering discontent caused a revolt in Savantvadi areas.

SOUTH INDIA

Revolt of Raja of Vizianagaram,

- The East India Company invited the wrath of the people of Northern Sarkar when, after the acquisition of these territories in 1765, it demanded a tribute of three lakh rupees from the Raja and also asked the Raja to disband his troops.
- The Raja supported by his subjects rose up in revolt.
- The Raja died in a battle in 1794.
- Finally, the Company offered the estate to the deceased Raja's son and reduced the demand for presents.

Poligars' Revolt,

- The Poligars of Dindigal and Malabar rose up against the oppressive land revenue system under the British rule using 1801-06.
- Sporadic rising of the Poligars in Madras Presidency continued till 1856.

Diwan Velu Tampi's Revolt

- 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.
- The ruler failed to pay the subsidy and fell in arrears. The high-handed attitude of the.
- Company compelled the Diwan, Velu Tampi, to rise against the Company, assisted by the Nair battalion.
- A large military operation had to be undertaken to restore peace.

Rampa Revolt,

- The hill tribesmen of Rampa in coastal Andhra revolted in March 1879 against the depredations of the government-supported mansabdar and the new restrictive forest regulations.
- Only after a large military operation could the rebels be defeated in 1880.

NORTH INDIA

Wahabi Movement,

- The Wahabi Movement was essentially an Islamic revivalist movement founded by Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly who was inspired by the teachings of Abdul Wahab (1703-87) of Saudi Arabia and Shah Waliullah of Delhi.
- Syed Ahmed condemned the western influence on Islam and advocated a return to pure Islam and, society as it was in the Arabia of the Prophet's time
- Syed Ahmed was acclaimed as the desired leader (Imam).
- A countrywide organisation with an elaborate secret code for its working under spiritual vice-regents (Khalifas) was set up, and Sithana in north-western tribal belt was chosen as a base for operations.
- In India, its important centre was at Patna though it had its missions in Hyderabad, Madras, Bengal, UP and Bombay.
- Since Dar-ul-Harb (the land of kafirs) was to be converted into Dar-ul-Islam (the land of Islam), a jihad was declared against the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab.
- After the defeat of the Sikh ruler and incorporation of the Punjab into the East India Company's dominion in 1849, the English dominion in India became the sole target of the Wahabis' attacks.
- The Wahabis played an important role in spreading anti British sentiments.
- A series of military operations by the British in the 1860s on the Wahabi base in Sithana and various court cases of sedition on the Wahabis weakened the Wahabi resistance, although sporadic encounters with the authorities continued into the 1880s and 1890s.

Kuka Revolt,

- The Kuka Movement was founded in 1840 by Bhagat Jawahar Mal (also called Sian Saheb) in western Punjab.
- After the British took the Punjab, the movement transformed from a religious purification campaign to a political one.
- Its basic tenets were abolition of caste and similar discriminations among Sikhs, discouraging the eating of meat and taking of alcohol and drugs, and encouraging women to step out of seclusion.
- In 1872, one of their leaders, Ram Singh, was deported to Rangoon.

WEAKNESSES OF THESE UPRISINGS

- These uprisings were massive in totality but were, in fact, localised and isolated.
- They were the result mostly of local grievances.
- The leadership was semi-feudal in character, backwardlooking, traditional in outlook and their resistance represented no societal

alternative.

➤ These rebellions were centuries old in form and ideological-cultural content.

➤ The less recalcitrant of these were pacified through concessions by the authorities.