

Q "The tribal & peasant rebellion laid the foundation of the revolt of 1857". Comment

The changing economic relations in the colonial period contributed to peasant grievances. Similarly, growing interference of the British in tribal areas disturbed their traditional way of living. This led to many peasant & tribal revolts in the early 17th century, late 18th century & early 19th century.

Peasant rebellions

i) Rangpur rebellion of 1783 - The hindu & muslim peasants in the northern districts of Bengal fought side by side against revenue contractors & company officials due to increased revenue demand & collection of illegal cesses.

ii) Pagal Panthi Movement - In Nymensingh district of east Bengal Karim Shah & Tipu Shah started a rebellion against the illegal abwabs exacted by the zamindars & against the new revenue settlement. Various peasants joined this rebellion which was ultimately crushed with the help of army in 1833.

iii) Moplah uprising - Moplahs of Malabar rose in revolt against a huge burden of illegal cesses & pro landlord attitude of the judiciary & police. They suffered due to new land revenue policy which turned them into mere tenants who can be evicted any time.

Tribal revolts

i) Bhil Uprising - British occupation of Khandah region brought in the outsiders & led to the dislocation of Bhils. The Bhils

While rose in revolt during 1819 but they were crushed & their leader Umaji Raje was executed in 1831.

ii) Kol Rebellion - Kol rebellion of 1831-32 took place in Chota Nagpur & Singhbhum region. British penetration posed a threat to the power of hereditary tribal chiefs. Finally, the British army had to move in to restore order.

iii) Santhal hool - Santhals cleared an area around Rajmahal hill for themselves & called it Domin-i-koh. But their tribal land was leased out to non-Santhal zamindars & moneylenders. Railways also penetrated in their area. This completely destroyed their familiar world & forced them to rise in rebellion against these outsiders (dikus). Santhal rebellion was brutally crushed by the British army in 1856.

Apart from these peasant & tribal revolts various other revolts took place such as the Sanyasi & Fakir rebellions of northern Bengal, Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya movement of Titu Mir in 24 Pargana of Bengal and Fairazi Movement under which Muslim poor united against the zamindars, indigo planters & the British rule. Thus, all these rebellions laid the foundation for the revolt of 1857. The revolt of 1857 was hence joined by this aggrieved rural society, which proves that it was certainly much more than an 'armed mutiny'.