

8th Standard- Social Science

History-When People Rebel

Nawabs lose their power: Nawabs and Rajas lost their powers to the East India Company. Residents stationed at Indian states worked effectively so that Indian states didn't join against the East India Company. Negotiations were put down by the East India Company, which was aiming to rule Delhi.

Peasants and Sepoys: Peasants and zamindars lost their lands to the moneylenders as rate of revenue was excessively increased due to the new land revenue measures and they could not pay it. Indian sepoys were ill paid; their religious sentiments were hurt.

From Meerut to Delhi: Mangal Pandey was hanged on 29th April, 1857 for attacking his officer. On 9th May, 1857 sepoys at Meerut were imprisoned as they refused to use the infield rifle. On 10th May, 1857 army sepoys released their sepoy companions and killed British officers. The sepoys then captured guns and ammunitions and marched towards Delhi. The sepoys stationed at Delhi garrison welcomed the sepoys from Meerut. British officers were murdered. The victorious sepoys declared Bahadur Shah Zafar as the emperor of India. Zafar unwillingly blessed the rebels and appealed the rulers to form a confederacy against the British.

The rebellion spread: The rulers of the states saw it as an opportunity to settle their scores from the company and rose in revolt for the fulfilment of their selfish aims of regaining their territory from East India Company.

The Company fights back: The Company was determined to suppress the revolt with all its might. It passed laws to demoralise rebels and mobilised troops from all the states and reinforcement arrived from England. Delhi was recaptured and gradually other rebel states were also recaptured.

Aftermath: By 1859, British regained control over the rebels. Parliament put an end to the East India Company rule in India. Office of Secretary of State was created, which was to be advised by the Indian council. Thus, government took the responsibility directly.

Since the mid-18th century, Nawabs and Rajas had gradually lost their power and authority. Their freedom reduced, their armed forces disbanded and their revenues and territories taken away. The company adopted policies to end the Mughal dynasty and thus paved the way for the British government to rule India.

Many ruling families such as Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi tried to negotiate with the company to protect their interest but they did not get success.

Now the Company began to plan to bring an end to the Mughal dynasty. To make this plan successful the Company took several measures.

The name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins minted by the Company.

In 1849, it was announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the family of the king would be shifted out of the Red Fort and given another place in Delhi to reside in.

In 1856, the Company decided that Bahadur Shah Zafar would be the last Mughal king, and after his death his descendants would be called princes.

In the countryside peasants and zamindars resented the high taxes and the rigid methods of revenue collection.

The Indian sepoys were unhappy about their pay, allowances and condition of service. Some of the Company's rule even violated their religious sentiments. Thus, everywhere there spread discontentment.

The responses to the reforms brought in the Indian society by the British were also not positive, although some reforms were essential.

The Company passed laws to stop the practice of sati.

English language education was promoted.

In 1850, a new law was passed to make conversion to Christianity easier.

Some Indians thought that the British were destroying their religion and their social customs while some wanted to change existing social practices.

By and by people began to view the British as their common enemy and, therefore, they rose up against this enemy at the same time.

In May 1857, a massive rebellion started that threatened the Company's very presence in India.

Sepoy mutinied in several places beginning from Meerut and a large number of people from different sections of society rose up in rebellion.

On 29 March 1857, Mangal Pandey, a young soldier, was hanged to death for attacking his officers in Barrackpore. This was too much for the sepoys. They refused to do the army drill using the new cartridges, which were suspected of being coated with the fat of cows and pigs. Thus, tension grew between the Company and sepoys.

The sepoys were determined to bring an end to the Company's rule. From Meerut they rushed to Delhi.

As the news of their arrival spread, the regiments stationed in Delhi also rose up in rebellion. They killed several British officers, seized arms and ammunitions, set buildings on fire.

They met the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar and proclaimed him as their leader.

The Mughal emperor got support from the rulers and chiefs of the country and together they rose against the British power.

After the British were routed from Delhi, there was no uprising for a few days. Then, a spurt of mutiny began.

Regiment after regiment mutinied and took off to join other troops at nodal points like Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow. After them, the people of the towns and villages also rose up in rebellion and rallied around local leaders, zamindars and chiefs who were prepared to fight the British. Thus, a widespread revolt shook the British confidence over ruling India.

The Company had no way out except suppressing the revolt with all its might. It brought reinforcements from England, passed new laws so that the rebels could be convicted with ease, and then moved into the storm centres of the revolt.

The Company recaptured Delhi from the rebel forces in September 1857. Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in court and sentenced to life imprisonment. He along with his wife were sent to prison in Rangoon.

But people in other areas still continued to resist and battle the British. The British had to fight for two years to suppress the massive forces of popular rebellion.

The British had regained control of the country by the end of 1859 but they could not carry on ruling the land with the same policies any more.

The British Parliament passed a new Act in 1858 and transferred the powers of the East India Company to the British Crown in order to ensure a more responsible management of Indian affairs.

The Governor-General of India was given the title of Viceroy, that is, a personal representative of the Crown. In this way the British government took direct responsibility for ruling India.

All ruling chiefs of the country were allowed to pass on their kingdoms to their heirs, including adopted sons. However, they were made to acknowledge the British Queen as their Sovereign Paramount.

Sepoy: Soldier

Mutiny: When soldiers together begin to disobey their officers in the army.

Firangis: Foreigners, Here, the term has been used for the Englishmen.

Ghazis: Religious warriors

Paramount: Supreme

1849 – Governor-General Dalhousie announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the family of the king would be shifted out of the Red Fort and given another place in Delhi to reside in.

1856 – (i) Governor-General Canning decided that Bahadur Shah Zafar would be the last Mughal king and after his death his descendants would be recognised as princes.

(ii) The Company passed a new law which stated that every new person who took up employment in the Company's army had to agree to serve overseas if required.

29 March 1857 – Mangal Pandey, a young soldier, was hanged to death for attacking his officers in Barrackpore.

May 1857 -Sepoys mutinied in several places.

10 May 1857 – Sepoys rushed to Delhi from Meerut.

September 1857 – Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar along with his wife was sent to prison in Rangoon.

October 1858 – A new Act passed by the British Parliament transferred the powers of the East India Company to the British Crown.

1858 – Bahadur Shah Zafar died in Rangoon jail.

