UNIT 9: LORD BENTINCK AND HIS REFORMS

Unit Structure

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

● Discuss the social reforms of Lord William Bentinck
● Analyse the liberal policies towards press
● Evaluate the educational reforms
● Discuss the financial and judicial reforms of Lord William Bentinck.

9.2 INTRODUCTION:

Lord Bentinck was known in the history of East India Company as a social reformer. He unlike other officers of the Company did not follow a purely expansionist policy. Along with the expansionist policy, Bentinck also
encouraged social reform programmes in the Colonial India. Thus he was an extraordinary officer of the Company and was able to receive good will of Indian people. In this unit, we will discuss the reform programmes of Bentinck in detail.

9.3 SOCIAL REFORMS

9.3.1 ABOLITION OF SATI

The term sati literally means ‘a pure and virtuous woman’. It is used in the case of a devoted wife who contemplates perpetual and uninterrupted conjugal union with her husband after life and as a proof thereof burns herself with the dead body of her husband. The belief that the dead need company and victuals in their journey to far off Paradise was prevalent among many primitive peoples, and it was customary to bury, with the body of a chief, his drinking bowls horses, dogs and even his favourite wives and concubines. Probably this practise was brought to India by the Indo-Scythian invaders. In India its popularity was due to a false sense of conjugal duty sanctioned by society and religion, though the motivating urges were economic and moral.

Some enlightened Indian princes had taken steps to abolish this cruel practice in their dominions. Emperor Akbar had attempted to restrict it. The Marathas had forbidden it in their dominions. The Portuguese at Goa and the French at Chandernagore had also taken some steps towards its abolition. The East India Company had however, adhered to its declared policy of non-interference into the social and religious customs of the people of India. Early British Governor-Generals like Cornwallis, Minto and Lord Hastings had taken some steps to restrict the practice of sati by discouraging compulsion, forbidding administration of intoxicating drugs to the sorrow-stricken widows, putting a ban on the burning of pregnant women or widows below 16 years of age and, above all, making compulsory the presence of police officials at the time of sacrifice, who were to see that no compulsion was used. These restrictions, however, proved inadequate and unsuccessful.
Enlightened Indian reformers led by Raja Rammohan Roy urged William Bentinck to take necessary steps and declare the practice of sati illegal. The loss of his sister-in-law by sati had stirred Rammohan Roy to action and he had published a number of pamphlets condemning the practice. His arguments were supported by many of the progressive Indian newspapers and the conscience of the nation had been awakened. William Bentinck provided the necessary legislative corrective. He collected relevant facts and figures about sati cases, obtained the views of army officers, of the Judges of Nizamat Adalat, of the Superintendents of Police of the Lower and Upper Provinces and came to the conclusion that there was no danger of mutiny or civil commotion. Regulation No. XVII of December 1829 declared the practice of sati or of burning or burying alive of widows illegal and punishable by the criminal courts as culpable homicide. The Regulation of 1829 was applicable in the first place to Bengal Presidency alone, but in 1830 was extended in different forms to Madras and Bombay Presidencies.

9.3.2 SUPPRESSION OF INFENTICIDE

The practice of killing infant girl child prevailed commonly among some Rajput tribes. Girl children were considered in traditional Indian society as inferior to boys. Women who gave birth to girl were considered as unfortunate. Many horrible measures were adopted to kill the girl child. Although infanticide had been declared illegal by Bengal Regulation XXI of 1795 and Regulation III of 1804, but the inhuman practice still continued. William Bentinck took vigorous steps to suppress this immoral and inhuman practice. His attention was also drawn to the ritual of offering child sacrifices at special occasions in Bengal. He issued prompt orders to stop this evil practice.

9.4 SUPPRESSION OF THUGI

Another great reform to the credit of William Bentinck is the suppression of thugs. Thugs were a hereditary assassins and robbers
who lived by preying upon innocent and defenceless travellers. A more appropriate name for thugs was *pansigar* derived from the scarf and noose used by the thugs to strangle their victims. There is no record available of their origin, but in the later part of the Mughal period they found a congenial atmosphere for their growth when all police arrangements broke down and public roads became insecure.

The thugs belonged to both Hindu and Muslim religions and worshipped the Hindu goddess like Kali, Durga or Bhawani to whom they offered the heads of their victim as a sacrifices. They believed that thugi was preordained means of livelihood for them and their victims were ordained to die at their hands. They maintained a much disciplined organisation. If some were expert stranglers, others were adept-in quick disposal of the dead bodies, still others good spies and informants. They had their own code of words and signs.

The strength of a thug gang varied from a single thug to as many as 400 thugs. Usually the victim was a single individual, but sometimes a dozen men were murdered at the same time. While there could be some difference of opinion about the abolition of sati, the public opinion solidly supported the Government measures to suppress thugi in 1830. The operations against the thugs were put in the charge of Colonel William Sleeman. The rulers of Indian states were invited to co-operate in this task. Colonel Sleeman arrested as many as 1,500 thugs and sentenced them to death or imprisonment for life. Thugi on an organised scale ceased to exist after 1837, although individual bad characters continued their nefarious activities.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Answer the following questions:

**Q. No. 1**: Which Governor General abolished the sati system?

**Q. No. 2**: Which province of India applied the Regulation of 1829 for the first time?

**Q. No. 3**: Who were thugs?

**Q. No. 4**: Thugs belonged to only Hindu Community. (True or false)
Bentinck’s policy towards the press was characterised by a liberal attitude. He believed the press to be a safety-value for discontent. The reduction of bhatta and other financial measures were subjects of severe criticism and even abuse in the press. His minute embodying the decision to impose some restrictions on the press contain his views. It runs thus:

“The Adjutant General of the Madras Army, who was at that time at Calcutta, described the angry feelings and language so loudly expressed here, and all the signs of the times, to be precisely similar to those which prevailed before the Madras mutiny, and he anticipated a similar explosion... The Mutiny did take place at Madras though there was not a shadow of liberty belonging to the press there... My firm belief is that more good than harm was produced by the open and public declaration of the sentiments of the army. There was vent to public feeling and the mischief was open to public view; and the result is so far confirmatory of the opinion here given that no overt act took place.” He, however, drew a distinction between discussions of a proposal and clamours against and censure of a final decision given by the Supreme Authority. Nor could he tolerate Government officials making use of official information to criticise the act of Government. He therefore, favoured a prohibitory order banning all further discussion on the question of bhatta. In reply to a joint petition of the Indian and European journalists of Calcutta seeking the abolition of all restrictions on the press, Lord William Bentinck’s Government assured the petitioners that “the unsatisfactory state of laws relating to the press had already attracted the notice of His Lordship in Council and he trusts that in no long time a system will be established which, while it gives security to every person engaged in the fair discussion of public measures, will effectively secure the Government against sedition and individuals against calumny.” In March 1835 William Bentinck was compelled to resign owing to ill health and it was left to his devoted lieutenant and successor Charles Metcalfe to remove the restrictions from the Indian press.
9.6 EDUCATIONAL REFORMS:

Bentinck’s great achievement was his intellectual reform. Charter Act of 1813 had provided one lac of rupees annually for the revival and promotion of education in India. But this money was not properly used. Prior to the arrival of Bentinck a great controversy was going on regarding the medium of education in the schools and colleges. Was it to be given through the Indian language or through English language? The Orientalises led by Heyman Wilson and H.T. Princes expressed their opinion in favour of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian as the medium of education. The Occidentalises led by Sir Charles Trevelyan supported by Indian liberals like Raja Rammohan Ray expressed their views in favour of English Language.

Lord Macauley, the law member of the Council gave a definite shape to the controversy. On his recommendations the decision was taken that the amount which was kept for education should be spent on the education of the Indians and the education be imparted through English medium. Macauley’s proposals were accepted by Bentinck and embodied in a resolution of March 7, 1835, which declared that, “His Lordship in council is of opinion that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and that all the fund appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.” Schools and colleges were established to provide English education. English language also became the official language and it helped the people of India for exchange of ideas.

9.7 FINANCIAL REFORMS

The Burmese war had depleted the treasury of the company. Due to the reduced income and increase in the expenditure, the company was facing a deficit of about one crore. So Bentinck’s first duty was to economize. His economies measures were extensive and severe.
Bentinck appointed two committees, one Military and one civil to enquire into the increased expenditure of the company. According to the recommendations of the Committee, Bentinck reduced the high salary of the civil Servants. He also reduced the allowances of both the civil and military officials. He made provision for the reduction of bhatta by 50% at all stations within four hundred miles of Calcutta. As a result of this measure a saving of £20,000 a year was effected.

During those days opium was produced in Central India and was sent to China from Karachi. Bentinck changed the route of the trade from Karachi to Bombay which gave the company a share in the profits in the form of duties.

Public institutions and individuals enjoyed rent free land in Bengal since the acquisition of Diwani. Bentinck ordered the collectors to make inquiries into the rights of those who held free grants of land. It was found that in most cases the title deeds were forged. The Government resumed the management of these rent free lands in Bengal and Bombay. This step of Bentinck also increased the revenue of the company. The land revenue settlement of North Western Provinces also yielded more revenue.

Bentinck also enhanced the income of the company by appointing Indians in administrative posts. The Indians were paid less salaries in comparison to their European Counterparts. The result of these economic measures was that the deficit of one crore per year was converted into a surplus of 2 crores per year.

9.8 JUDICIAL REFORMS

The Provincial Courts of appeal and circuit had been largely responsible for the huge arrears of cases. The judicial procedure followed in these courts often resulted in delays and uncertainties. Bentinck abolished these courts. He established different grades of courts to avoid delay in the trial of cases. He established a Supreme Court in Agra. The civil and criminal appeals were heard in this court.
In 1829 magistrates were empowered to award punishment up to two years. A separate Sadar Diwani Adalat and Sadr Nizamat Adalat were set up at Allahabad for the convenience of the people of Delhi and Upper Provinces. Bentinck also reduced the severity of the punishment. The system of beating a man with whips was abolished by Bentinck.

So far, Persian had been the language of the court. Both the public and the Judges were ignorant of Persian. So Bentinck ordered the use of vernacular language in place of Persian. In higher courts Persian was replaced by English as the court language. Qualified Indians were appointed as Munsiffs and Sadar Amins.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**State true or false:**

**Q. No. 5:** English language was preferred by Lord Macauley to impart education in India.

**Q. No. 6:** Bentinck reduced the high salary of the civil Servants to meet the economic scarcity of the Company.

**Q. No. 7:** Bentinck ordered the use of Persian language in the Courts.

**Q. No. 8:** Bentinck encouraged the severity of the punishment.

The seven years of Bentinck’s administration gave a period of respite from an almost continuous policy of wars and annexations. The appointment of Lord William Bentinck as the Governor-General of India marked the dawn of a new era in the annals of British rule in India. He continued as Governor-General from 1828 to 1835 in India. He was a man of peace, discipline and of economy. He was a liberal reformist who took active part in the reform movement of England. He had a firm faith in the programme of peace retrenchment and reform.
9.9 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt-

- social reform programmes, which included abolition of Sati and abolition of infanticide etc. which were obstacles of Indian society.
- His initiative to suppress the Thugs who were hereditary assassins and robbers who lived by preying upon innocent and defenceless travellers.
- The liberal policies adopted by William Bentinck towards the freedom of press.
- The educational policy of William Bentinck as well as financial and judicial reforms initiate by him.

9.10 FURTHER READING

1. Bipan Chandra: *India’s Struggle for Independence*
2. Hermann Kukle; Dietmar Rothermund: *A History of India*
4. Douglas M. Peer: *India under colonial rule: 1700-1885*
5. Sekhar Bandhopadhyay: *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*
6. Percival Spear: *The Oxford History of Modern India (1740-1975)*
7. B. L. Grover; S. Grover: *A New Look of Modern Indian History*
8. W Cooke Taylor: *A popular History of British India*
9. R.C. Majumdar (Volume-I / Volume-II) *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*

9.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question no 1: Lord William Bentinck
Answer to the question no 2: In Bengal
Answer to the question no 3: Thugs were hereditary assassins and robbers who lived by preying upon innocent and defenceless travellers.

Answer to the question no 4: False

Answer to the question no 5: True

Answer to the question no 6: True

Answer to the question no 7: False

Answer to the question no 8: False

9.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) VERY SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q. No.1: Why Sati was abolished?

Q. No.2: Who was Raja Rammohan Roy?

Q. No.3: Why did Bentinck encourage the use of vernacular languages in place of the Persian language in the Courts?

Q. No.4: Why the Charter act of 1813 is important?

B) SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q. No.1: Estimate Lord William Bentinck in your own words.

Q. No.2: Write a short note on abolition of infanticide.

Q. No.3: Write a short note on financial reforms of William Bentinck.

C) LONG QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q. No.1: Discuss the liberal policy adopted by William Bentinck towards press.

Q. No.2: Discuss the social reform programmes of William Bentinck in India.
UNIT 10: ANNEXATION OF SIND

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives
10.2 Introduction
10.3 Annexation of Sind
10.4 Causes of Annexation
  10.4.1 Strategic Consideration
  10.4.2 Commercial Possibility
10.5 Auckland’s Policy towards Sind
10.6 Ellenborough and the Annexation of Sind
10.7 Let Us Sum Up
10.8 Further Reading
10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
10.10 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the causes for the British annexation of Sind.
- Discuss Auckland’s defensive policy towards Sind from the threat of Russia.
- Discuss formal annexation of Sind during the time of Lord Ellenborough.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to discuss how British annex the Sind as a tool of defence for the north-western frontier of India. The problem of defence for the English was the fear of Russia (the rivalry of English in Europe and Asia) that brought into direct contact and clash with the Afghans and Sind. Due to this fear during the time of Lord Auckland (1837-42), Afghan war (1839) was fought, which invested Sindhu with great political importance.
as the route from Kandahar via Quetta and Bolan Pass to India passed through the territories of Sind. The commercial possibilities of the river Sind were also attracted the English for its annexation. The Conquest of Sind (1843) was completed during the time of Lord Ellenborough (1842-43). It is perhaps the one of many unjust annexations of Indian territories by the British.

10.3 ANNEXATION OF SIND

Before going to the proposed topic, it is imperative to know about the early history of Sind. Sind is the country lying on both sides of the Indus, south of the Punjab and extending to the Arabian Sea in the north-western frontier of British India. During the Mughal’s rule in India, Sind was under them. Mughal’s submitted it to Persia under Nadir Shah and after his death, it made allegiance to Afghanistan for some time. In the eighteenth century Sind rise as an autonomous state first under Kallora chieftains. In 1771, a Baluchi tribe of the Talpuris who were hardy men and excellent soldiers rose in the plains of Sind. By ousting the Kalloras in 1783 Sind nominally a part of the Durani kingdom in Afghanistan, as was ruled by the Baluchi tribe. Under the Amirs of the Baluchi tribe, it was divided into three units each under a separate branch of the tribe. These were one in upper Sind with Khairpur as its capital, another in lower Sind with Hyderabad as its capital and the third with its capital at Mirpur, to the north east of the last named city. The Amir of Khairpur claimed nominal sovereignty over the other two kingdoms.

The rulers of Sind were known as Amirs who were practically independent, though the Hyderabad family claimed a position of supremacy. Each Amir were also under a long standing convention, bound to consult the members of his family on all important matters. The domains of the Amirs extended up to the border of Cutch, which touched the frontier of British territory in India. They also included Karachi the well-known port, Shikarpur an important centre of trade with the west and the fortress of
Gukkur, which stands on a rock in the middle of bed of the Sindhu. So, commercially and strategically it was an important place for the British.

10.4 Causes of Annexation

If we analyze the annexation of Sind from the English point of view than we will find two causes, i.e., strategic and commercial. Between these two causes, strategic consideration is main for the English. These two causes were as follows:

10.4.1 Strategic Consideration

Strategically Sind is located in a suitable place and British attempted to safeguard this area from any foreign attack. When Napoleon Bonapart, French ruler (1804-1814) emerged in Europe, Lord Minto (1807-13) to safeguard the area for the fear of Napoleon, send Missions to Kabul, Persia, Lahore, and Sind. A Treaty of Eternal Friendship was signed with the Amirs of Sind in 1809. By this treaty:

- There would be mutual intercourse through envoys.
- The Amirs would not allow the French to settle in Sind.

In 1820, the treaty was renewed. Meanwhile Ranjit Singh, the Sikh King (1797-1839), strengthened the Sikh community and brought his dominions to the frontier of Sind but failed to occupy the Sind. At that time, due to the Ranjit Singh’s strong position British Government did not have any special interest in Sind.

Although with the defeat of Napoleon (1815) the threat of French attack ended, but Russian fear emerged. British feared that Russia might attack India through Afghanistan or Persia. To counter Persian advance, the British Government decided to increase its influence in Afghanistan and Persia. They realized that this policy could be successful only if Sind was brought under British control. The fear of Persian advance and Russian influence in Sind ultimately resulted in the Afghan war of 1839. It also invested British political importance on Sind, as the route from Kandahar via Quetta and the Bolan Pass to India passed through the territories of the Amirs.
10.4.2 Commercial Possibility

There were references of British commercial intentions upon the Sind before its final annexation. From the very beginning, British realized the important of the Sindhu as a channel of commerce. In 1630, when Mughal’s ruled in India, East India Company got firman (It was called as a megnacarta of trade, which gave various trading facilities) from them for trade in Sind and established factories. Although in the seventeenth century no attempt was made to extort the commerce of Sind, but in 1775, the East India Company established a factory at Thatla, in a commercial town, which was later abandoned in 1792.

Already British had an idea about the commercial possibility of Sind and in 1831, a mission was sent under Alexander Burnes under the orders of Lord Ellenborough, who was the President of the Board of Control at that time. Burnes proceeded to Lahore and submitted a report, which emphasized the great facility afforded by the Sindhu for the transport of the commerce. There was sea as well as land route via Heart, Kandahar, and Quetta to Shikarpur in Sind, which was then a great centre of trade.

After Burnes mission, Lt. Col Pottinger, the British Resident in Cutch of Sind was directed to open negotiations with them for the conclusion of a commercial treaty. The Amirs of Sind were suspicious of the proposed commercial treaty, which to them aimed at gaining political supremacy. They tried to avoid the treaty and even sought the help of Shah Suja on the one hand and the Barakzai rulers of Kabul on the other but could not avail any support. The Amirs of Hyderabad and Khairpur were forced to conclude a new treaty in 1822. By this treaty, the rivers and roads of Sind were open to British merchants and traders, but English merchant cannot settle in Sind and travelers and visitors were required to have passports. Besides, tariff rates were to be announced, no military dues or tolls to be demanded and the Amirs reserved the rights to alter the tariff. A supplementary treaty settled the details of tariff rates in 1834. Again, the old treaties of friendship were confirmed and Colonel Pottinger was stationed as the Company’s political agent in Sind.
Auckland's policy towards Sind was based on a defensive theory. Auckland looked upon Sind as the larger problem of the defence of India against Russian designs. Auckland believe that due to the weak of Amirs of Sind, Russia might attack Sind. To counter Russian plans he wanted to establish influence over the Afghans and Sind. A necessary preliminary step was taken by the Auckland towards British designs in Afghanistan. To control the Sind Auckland waited for a pretext.

To protect Sind from any foreign attack in April 1809 British as a neighboring country, signed treaty of Amritsar with Ranjit Singh. This treaty thwarted the Ranjit Singh’s design in Sind. But from 1834 to 1836, Ranjit Singh violating the treaty attempting to conquest Sind. In 1836, he moved his troops towards Sind and captured Rojhan, the seat of the Mezari chief on the frontier of Singh.

When Ranjit Singh invaded the Sind, British got the pretext to protect Sind from the Sikhs and to violate the Anglo-Amir treaty of 1832. It was
mentionable that during the time of Lord William Bentinck (1828-1833) a treaty was concluded containing the following terms:

- A free passage for English travelers and merchants would be given through Sind.
- Indus would be used for commercial pursuits.
- No war vessel would pass through the Indus River.
- No military use would be made of this river.
- No English merchant would be settled in Sind.
- Travellers and visitors would be required to have pass permits.
- The old treaty of friendship was confirmed.

However, Lord Auckland after 1836 decided to fully exploit the situation to their advantage. He regarded the situation as the best opportunity of establishing the British influence on a solid basis in Sind. It was of great importance to the British primarily from its commanding the entrance to the Indus and from its position in reference to the Punjab and Afghanistan. Auckland therefore instructed Colonel Pottinger, (Agent for the affairs of Sind) to impress upon the Amirs of Sind that they could be saved from this dangerous situation only through the mediation of the British. Auckland became successful in his attempt and Amirs reluctantly compelled to sign a new treaty in 1838. The terms of the treaty were:

- The Amirs accepted the Company's mediation in their dispute with the Sikhs
- Amirs accepted a British resident at Hyderabad who could move freely with the escort of British troops.
- The cost of troops would be borne by the Amirs themselves.

After that, Auckland to solve the Afghan problem effectively and to counter the Russian influence wanted a line of operations against Afghanistan through Sind. With this in mind English in June 1838, signed a Tripartite Treaty with Ranjit Singh, Shah Suja (Ruler of Kabul). According to the Treaty:

- Ranjit Singh accepted British mediation in his dispute with the Amirs of Sind.
Shah Shuja agreed to relinquish his sovereign rights on Sind on condition of receiving the arrears of tribute.

Amirs of Sind pay to Shah Shuja a sum of money. At first money was fixed as twenty lakhs and then raised to twenty-five lakhs of rupees. It was mentionable that as regards the payment, it was a legacy of old days when Sind was part of Durani kingdom of Afghanistan. But the payment was never paid except when the rulers of Kabul was strong enough to enforce payment and the Amirs were no mood to pay anything.

The troops of the British and Shah Suja were to pass through the territories of the Amirs of Sind.

The treaty showed Auckland’s motive to protect the Sind from Russian invasion. Without the consent or even knowledge of the Amirs of Sind, Auckland imposed it. The clauses clearly violated the treaty signed between the British and the Amirs in 1838. The Amirs produced documentary evidence to show that Shah himself had exempted them from all claims. But to obtain finances for the Afghan War and secure territories in Sind in order to establish a line of operations against Afghanistan through Sind Auckland interfered upon the Sind.

Auckland with a view of increasing Russian threat in 1839 compelled the Amirs to accept a treaty. By this treaty, it was decided that:

- British subsidiary force was to be stationed at Shikarpur and Bukkar.
- For the maintenance of British troops, the Amirs of Sind were to pay three lakhs of rupees annually.
- The Amirs were not to have any negotiations with foreign states without the knowledge of the Company.
- They were to provide store houses at Karachi for military supplies and abolish all tolls on the Indus.
- They were also to furnish an auxiliary force for the Afghan War if called upon to do so.
- The British in return promised not to interfere in the internal affairs of Sind. The British would protect them from foreign aggressions.
During the time of Lord Auckland because of such treaties signed with the different Amirs, Sind was practically under British protection and the Confederacy of the Amirs was virtually dissolved. The navigation of the Sindhu was rendered free of all tolls and to guarantee all this, a British force was to be maintained to the west of the Sindhu. But the most important consequence was to use the words of Auckland: Sind is placed formally under British protection and brought within the circle of our Indian relations.” This statement reveals the fulfillment of British motives in establishing relations in Sind viz, the consolidation of British influence and the extension of the general benefits of commerce throughout Afghanistan, the ultimate goal of British policy in the north-east for the fear of Russian advance.

Various historians criticized Auckland’s policy towards Sind. P. E. Roberts History of British India described that “Under Auckland British policy in India had fallen to a power level of unscrupulousness than ever before” and that their policy towards Sind may be guided by political reasons but its unjustifiable on moral ground. It was clearly an unjust and oppressive action against the Amirs for whom the British professed great friendship and who had not done any harm to them.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Which Treaty thwarted the Ranjit Singh’s design in Sind?

Q 8: Write one term of the Treaty of 1836?

Q 9: Who was sent to Sind by Auckland to make a negotiation?

Q 10: Between whom the Tripartite Treaty was signed?
10.6. Lord Ellenborough (1842-44) and Annexation of Sind

In 1842, Lord Ellenborough succeeded the Auckland as Governor General. Auckland did all the pioneering works for the annexation of Sind; Ellenborough gave the final touch for its annexation. After Auckland’s policy became unsuccessful in Afghan war, Lord Ellenborough proved to be even more unscrupulous in dealing with the Amirs of Sind. He wanted to avenge the humiliation by annexing Sind on the one or the other pretext. Ellenborough labored hard to regain the prestige of English through the annexation of Sind.

As the first step of processing, the annexation of Sind by Ellenborough in September 1842 replaced Charles Napier in place of Major James Qutram as Company’s resident in Sind. Napier was given full civil and military authority and placed in charge of all troops of upper and lower Sind. Napier was determined to annex Sind and therefore announced several charges against the Amirs. Amir Rustum of Khairpur was charged for entering into secret intercourse with foreign states by violating the treaty with British, mal treatment of British public servants; obstructing the navigation of the Indus, illegal imprisonment of British subjects etc. Against Nasir Khan of Hyderabad the charges were- assembling of troops to attack Sher Mohammad of Mirpur, which was under British arbitration, after British fail in Afghanistan delaying of transfer of Shikarpur to British, preventing his subjects from settling and trading in the British cantonment at Karachi etc. Above all these two Amirs were charged for secret offensive and defensive alliance against the Company.

Based on the reports of Napier, Ellenborough proposed a new treaty to the Amirs and Qutram was sent, as Commissioner to Sind to negotiate the details. Napier demanded from the Amirs:

- The right to mint coins
- To supply coal to the British steamers passing through the river Indus.
- To surrender the Thatta, Sakkar, Bakhar, Karachi, Rohri etc.

The Amirs naturally looked upon this provision as a complete surrender of their natural rights, but Amirs accepted the above mentioned terms. However, Napier suspected that the Amirs were preparing for war.
Meanwhile a succession dispute took place Khairpur of Sind, which gave Napier the opportunity to interfere. Napier supported the claims of Ali Murad, brother of the old Mir Rustum in preference to the claims of Mir Rustum’s sons. Napier’s intention was to have only one governing chief in each province, instead of many, which would simplify the Company’s political dealings with the princes. Mir Rustum, however abdicated in favour of his son and took to flight. From the flight of Mir Rustum may be dated the commencement of the Sindi war. The Amirs of Upper Sind fled to the desert, but Napier was suspecting about the Lower Sind.

Napier had begun military operations against Sind even without any declaration of war. He attacked the fortress of Imangarh in January 1843, situated in the heart of the desert. In February 1843, Napier defeated a Baluchi army at Miani and won another victory at Dabo, six miles from Hyderabad. By April, the whole of Sind was reduced to submission. The amirs were made captives and some were banished from Sind. Napier accepted $70,000 as a sort of booty from the plunder of Sind and Sir Napier was appointed as the first governor of Sind.

The annexation of Sind has met with universal condemnation at the hands of both Politicians and Historians. Historian Ramsay Muir writes- “Sind is the only British acquisition in India of which it may fairly be said that it was not necessitated by circumstances; and that it was therefore an act of aggression.”

Figure-10.1

Source: Krishna Reddy, Indian History, p-c58
CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q 11: Who was the Governor General of India after Lord Ellenborough?

Q 12: Which year Ellenborough became the Governor General of India?

Q 13: Who was Charles Napier?

10.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that,

- Commercial possibilities of the Indus.
- British fear of the expansion of the Russian Empire towards the East.
- British desire to increase its influence in Persia and Afghanistan through control over Sind.
- Lord Auckland forced the Amirs to sign the Subsidiary Treaty in 1839.
- Lord Ellenborough unnecessarily provoked the Amirs and people of Sind into a war. Sir Charles Napier was appointed as the British resident in Sind in place of Major James Outram (1842) for the annexation of Sind.
- Formal annexation of Sind by the British (1843). Appointment of Sir Napier as the first governor of Sind.

10.8 FURTHER READING

1. Bipan Chandra: *India’s Struggle for Independence*
2. Hermann Kukle; Dietmar Rothermund: *A History of India*
3. Philip Lawson: *The East India Company: A History*
4. Douglas M. Peer: *India under colonial rule: 1700-1885*
5. Sekhar Bandhopadhyay: *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*

6. B. L. Grover; S. Grover: *A New Look of Modern Indian History*

7. W Cooke Taylor: *A popular History of British India*

8. Percival Spear: *The Oxford History of Modern India (1740-1975)*

9. R.C. Majumdar: *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*

### 10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** 1837

**Ans to Q No 2:** 1630.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Thatla

**Ans to Q No 4:** Amirs of Sind promised to British not to allow the French to settle in Sind.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Ranjit Singha was a contemporary Sikh ruler of British who ruled Punjab between 1797-1839.

**Ans to Q No 6:** Amirs

**Ans to Q No 7:** Treaty of Amritsar (April, 1809)

**Ans to Q No 8:** The Amirs of Sind accepted the British resident at Hyderabad, who could move freely with the escort of British troops, the cost of which would be borne by the Amirs themselves.

**Ans to Q No 9:** Pottinger

**Ans to Q No 10:** Tripartite Treaty was signed between Ranjit Singh, Shah Suja and the British.

**Ans to Q No 11:** Lord Ellenborough

**Ans to Q No 12:** 1842

**Ans to Q No 13:** Charles Napier was a new resident in Sind in place of Major James Qutram appointed by Ellenborough in September 1842.
10.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)
Q 1: Write one provision of the Tripartite Treaty.
Q 2: Who wrote the book History of British India?
Q 3: Which year British captured the fortress of Imamgarh?
Q 4: Who was the first British Governor of Sind?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)
Q 1: Write about the commercial cause for the annexation of Sind by the British?
Q 2: Write the terms of the Tripartite Treaty?
Q 3: Write shortly about the Charles Napier’s charges about the Amirs of Sind.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)
Q 1: Discuss the policy of Lord Auckland towards Sind.
Q 2: How did the Lord Ellenborough formally annexed the Sind?

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UNIT 11: ANGLO-SIKH RELATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives
11.2 Introduction
11.3 Anglo-Sikh Relation
11.4 Relation with the Neighbouring States,
   11.4.1 Relation with the Dogras and Nepalese
   11.4.2 Relation with the Afghans
11.5 Anglo-Sikh Wars
   11.5.1 First War
   11.5.2 Second War
11.6 Annexation of Punjab
11.7 Let Us Sum Up
11.8 Further Reading
11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
11.10 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Assess the Ranjit Singh’s relation with the British.
- Discuss the Ranjit Singh’s relation with the neighbouring states.
- Identify the causes and results of Anglo-Sikh wars and the formal
  annexation of Punjab during the time of Lord Dalhousie.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to discuss the Anglo-Sikh relation in the
history of India. It can be studied into two broad phases i.e relation during
the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and after the death of Ranjit Singh (Anglo-
Sikh Wars). Ranjit Singh was the only Indian ruler who remained independent
in the expansionist and imperialist designs of the East India policy. But
following the death of Ranjit Singh, the state became unstable due to the
history of plots and counter-plots, murders and assassinations, of desertions
and treachery of the rulers. This ultimately led the Anglo-Sikh wars and
British annexed Punjab in 1849.

11.3 ANGLO-SIKH RELATION

Before going to the proposed topic, it is imperative to know about
the rise of Sikh power in the history of Punjab. With the following of decline
Mughal authority the history of Punjab was started. When Emperor Nadir
Shah, the Shah of Persia (1736-47) invaded in March 1739 and Ahmad
Shah Abdali or Ahmad Shah Durani, (the founder of Durrani empire and is
regarded as the founder the modern state of Afghanistan-1747-1773) invaded
seven times (between 1748 and 1767) in the Mughal empire, Punjab became
a state of chaos and misrule. Ahmad Shah Abdali claimed Punjab as a part
of his dominion. But after Ahmad Shah the successor could not keep control
over the Punjab and it became a no man’s land. In this political condition
sikh misls under Sikh chieftains emerged in Punjab which held extensive
territories. Among the twelve such important misls, Sukarchakyia misl, was
important, which controlled the territory between the Ravi and the Chenab.
Ranjit Singh was born in Gujranwala in 2 November 1780 at the house of
Mohan Singh, who was the leader of Sukarchakyia misl. When Mahan Singh
died Ranjit Singh was only twelve years of age and so from 1792-97 a
Council of Regency took over the Government. In 1797, Ranjit Singh
overthrew the Regency and took over the administration in his hand.

Zaman Shah Abdali, (1770-1844) the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali
considered himself as the rightful ruler of the Punjab and led number of
invasions. In the invasion of 1798, Ranjit Singh offered valuable services to
him. Due to this service, the Afghan ruler authorized Ranjit Singh to occupy
Lahore and rule it on behalf of the Afghan ruler. At this time, the important
misls were in a state of disintegration and there was a civil war in Afghanistan.
By taking advantage, Ranjit Singh established a kingdom in Central Punjab.
He occupied Lahore, the political capital of Punjab in 1799, which enhanced his prestige. Very soon, he took control over Amritsar, the religious capital of the Sikhs. The other Sikh misls like the Kanhavia Ramgarhia and Ahluwalla misls submitted his authority to Ranjit Singh. After that, he desired to become the ruler of the entire Sikh people and with that objective; he wanted to bring the cissutlej (Malwa) territories under subjugation. To achieve his goal Maharaja organized three expeditions, which ultimately led in contact with the British.

**Anglo-Sikh Relation during the Time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh:**

The Anglo- Sikh relation during the time of Ranjit Singh can be analyzed through the following headings.

**British Mission (1800):** The first contact between Ranjit Singh and British took place in the year of 1800. There were two important reasons in this respect. Firstly fearing of British of an Afghan invasion of India under Zaman Shah of Kabul and secondly Ranjit Singh’s ambition to acquire the cissutlej (Malwa) territories. As early as 1800, the English sent Mughal Yusaf Ali to the court of Ranjit Singh with the request that the Maharaja should not join Zaman Shah in case he invaded India. However, the danger of Zaman’s invasion receded and Yusuf Ali was recalled.

**Treaty of Lahore (1806):** In 1805, Jaswant Rao Holkar, a prominent Maratha Chief came to Amritsar and sought help against the English. Ranjit Singh however was suspicious of Jaswant Rao and afraid of incurring the hostility of the English as he was, busy in his plan of expansions towards the west. In January 1, 1806, Ranjit Singh signed a treaty of Friendship with General Lake, agreeing to force Jaswanta Rao Holkar to leave Amritsar. General Lake in turn promised to respect the territorial integrity of Ranjit Singh’s dominions.
Sir Charles Metcalf’s Meeting with Ranjit Singh (1808)

Agreement of 1806 did not contain any clause regarding the eastern limit of Ranjit Singh’s territory. He therefore decided to bring Cis-Sutlej Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha and Jind under him. Ranjit Singh led expeditions to Malwa and he occupied a few places. This alarmed the Sikh rulers of Malwa and they approached the British resident at Delhi. Governor General Lord Minto (1807-13) was alarmed by a probable joint Franco-Russian invasion of India in 1807. So he therefore sent Charles Metcalfe to Lahore to negotiate a friendly treaty with Ranjit Singh. Maharaja offered to accept Metcalfe’s proposal on the condition that the English would remain neutral in case of Sikh-Afghan war. The other was that the British would recognize Ranjit Singh the sovereign of the entire Punjab including Malwa (Cis-Sutlej) territories. The negotiations did not succeed, as Charles Metcalfe did not accept the Maharaja’s proposal.

Treaty of Amritsar (1809): Ranjit Singh continued his policy of expansion in the Cis-Sutlej area. In 1808, he crossed the Sutlej and occupied Faridkot, Maiserkotla and Ambala. The rulers of these places approached Metcalfe who protested but Ranjit Singh paid no head. In the meantime Napoleonic danger somewhat receded (because of the Spanish revolt) and the English now thought of adopting a tough attitude towards Ranjit Singh. An English army marched into Ludhiana and in Feb 1809 issued a proclamation declaring “the cis-sutlej states to be under British protection and that any aggressions of the chief of Lahore would be resisted with arms.” This compelled Ranjit Sing to sign the Treaty of Amritsar in 25 April 1809 with the British. The terms of the Treaty were as follows:

- River Sutlej became the boundary line between the territories of Ranjit Singh and the British.
- The British Government would respect the territorial integrity with regard to the Maharaja’s territory to the north of the river Sutlej.
- The Maharaja would maintain only limited troops on the left bank of the river as would be necessary for the internal administration of the region.
The Maharaja would not encroach on the possessions and rights of the chiefs in the neighborhood.

In case of any violation of the Provisions of this Treaty and the rules of friendship, the treaty would be regarded as invalid.

The Treaty of Amritsar was important from the point of view of Anglo-Sikh relations. It primarily checked the cherished ambitions of Ranjit Singh to extend his rule over the Sikh nation. As the river Sutlej became the natural boundary between the British and the ruler of Lahore, which brought the British close to the Lahore Kingdom. Besides, the Treaty gave the Company a degree of control over Ranjit Singh's relations with the neighbouring states of Sindh, Bahawalpur and Afghanistan.

**Durbar at Rupar (1831)**

Except minor irritants on some matters, relations remained somewhat friendly. In October 1831, William Bentinck met Ranjit Singh at Rupar and both parties professed friendship for each other. William Bentinck rejected all proposals of the Maharaja for the partition of Sind. At that time Collonel Pottinger, the British Agent in Sind, concluded a commercial treaty with the Amir of Hyderabad and the Maharaja was told that the Treaty was of a purely commercial nature. Although Ranjit Singh was alarmed of British motives in the signing of this treaty, he was not in a position to take action.

**Tripartite Treaty (1839)**

In fear of Russian advance into Afghanistan, the Company decided to install Shah Shuja in place of Dost Mohammad, as the ruler of Kabul. Ranjit Singh was asked to join in the project. The British agent Macnaghten threatens that the expedition would be undertaken whether Ranjit Singh joined or not, which brought the latter to sign Tripartite Treaty on June 1838. The Maharaja, however, refused to give passage to the British army through his dominions.
CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In which year Nadir Shah invaded India?

Q 2: Who was Ahmad Shah Abdali?

Q 3: Write the name of one important misl of Punjab.

Q 4: In which year Treaty of Lahore was signed?

Q 5: Write one term of Treaty of Amritsar.

Q 6: Between whom Tripartite Treaty was signed.

11.4. Relation with the Neighbouring States:

In the neighbourhood of Ranjit Singh, some states were there. Among the states Dogras, Nepalese and Afghanistan rulers were strategically became the rivalry of Ranjit Singh and fought with each other.

11.4.1 Relation with the Dogras and Nepalese

When Ranjit Singh was busy in extending his sway over the plains of the Punjab, the Dogra chief Sansar Chand Katoch with his headquarters at Kangra wanted to extend his influence over the Alpine Punjab. In 1804, Sansar Chand advanced upto Bajwara and Hoshiarpur. Ranjit Singh dispatched an army from Lahore, which checked the progress of Sansar Chand and captured Hoshiarpur.

As the Ranjit Singh checked the Sansar Chand in the plains, he attempted to extend his dominion over the neighboring hill states. Threatened by Sansar Chand, the hill chief of Kahlur (who held territories on both sides of Sutlej) sought help from the Gurkhas of Nepal. A Gurkha army under
Amar Singh Thapa besieged Kangra. When Sansar Chand failed to meet the challenge single-handedly, he resorted for Ranjit Singh's helps and agreed to surrender the fort of Kangra as the price of military assistance. A Sikh army under Diwan Mohkam Chand foiled all their plans of expansion by defeating the Gurkhas. Ranjit Singh annexed Kangra, and Sansar Chand came under Sikh protection. Later in 1837, when the Maharaja’s relations with the British became strained, he accepted a Nepalese mission at Lahore and Gurkha soldiers were enlisted in the Maharaja’s army.

11.4.2 Relation with the Afghans

During Ahmad Shah Abdali’s time, Punjab formed a part of the Afghan dominion. After Abdali’s death in 1773, the Sikh misls established their authority in central and eastern Punjab. As the successors of Abdali engaged themselves in internal conflicts, so the power of Ranjit Singh became increased.

In 1800 Shah Shuja, the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali occupied the throne of Kabul. In 1809, his brother Shah Mahmud ousted Shah Shuja from power with the help of the Barakzai sirdars, Fateh Khan and Dost Mohammad, who were powerful in Kashmir and Peshawar. Shah Shuja sought the help of Ranjit Singh to recover the throne of Kabul and came to Lahore. It is here that Ranjit Singh took the famous Kahinoor diamond and wanted to conquer Multan, Kashmir and other Afghan Provinces on behalf Shah Shuja. The latter escaped from Lahore and sought the Company’s protection at Ludhiana. In 1831, Shah Shuja once again sought to recover the lost throne with the help of Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh offered to help Shah Shuja on the terms that if the latter would send his heir-apparent to attend on the Maharaja with an auxiliary force, agree to ban cow-slaughter in Afghanistan and deliver to him the gates of the temple of Somnath. Shah Shuja refused to accept such terms. In 1834, fearing Shah Shuja’s motives and British intension, Ranjit Singh annexed Peshawar. Dost Muhammad (who had occupied the thrones of Kabul then) gave resistance to Ranjit Singh, but failed to blockade Ranjit Singh. In 1835, Ranjit Singh concluded
a treaty with Shah Shuja who agreed to recognize the Maharaja’s claims over the Afghan territories on the right bank of the Indus.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Write the name of Dogra chief who invaded Ranjit Singh’s empire.

Q 8: Who was Amar Singh Thapa?

Q 9: From whom Ranjit Singh got famous Kahinoor diamond.

11.5 Anglo- Sikh Wars:

After Ranjit Singh’s death, (June 1839) there was chaos and confusion in Punjab. Several warring groups emerged in the Royal family and the Khalsa army became more powerful. Conspiracies and intrigues were become common in Punjab. As the Khalsa army became more powerful, it made, and unmade rulers of Punjab. There were an intense struggle for succession to the throne.

After Ranjit Singh’s death Kharak Singh became the ruler of Punjab, who was an opium eater and an unworthy ruler. Due to his weakness, Sindhanwalia sirdars (Chet Singh, Atar Singh, Lohna Singh and their nephew Ajit Singh) and the Dogra brothers (Dhian Singh, Golab Singh and Suchet Singh) brought anarchy and confusion to the Punjab. After Kharak Singh, Naonihal Singh, Sher Singh were the rulers of Punjab, but murdered. Ultimately, in September 1843 Dalip Singh, five-year-old son of Ranjit Singh was succeeded as the king, Rani Jindan as regent and Hira Singh himself fell a victim of court intrigues and was murdered. There was absence of any control over the army (Khalsa). Thus, two wars were fought between Sikh and British.
11.5.1 First War (1845-46)

Causes:

The causes of the first Anglo-Sikh war were as follows:

- British were closely watching the happenings in Punjab. They took advantage of the situation. In 1842, disregarding the Tripartite Treaty of 1839 British troops passed through Punjab in the First Afghan War (1836-42). They had lost prestige in the First Afghan War and wanted to re-establish their supremacy by capturing Punjab.

- In 1843, the British had annexed Sind, which feared Sikhs. The Lahore Durbar (Ruling Group) wanted to reduce the power of the Khalsa army in twin cause. The ruling Sikh Sardars thought that if the Khalsa army became victory means the expansion of the territory, which would divert the attention from politics. In case of defeat, its strength would be reduced and it would become less dangerous. So the rulers wanted fight against the British.

- British encircled Punjab from 1833 itself. They occupied Ferozpur in 1835, Sikharpur in 1836 and appointed British Residents at Ludhiana and in Sind in 1838. They also prepared military by increasing army from 2,500 in 1836 to 14,000 in 1843. It became the cause of first Anglo-Sikh War.

Courses:

Encouraged by the Lahore Durbar the Khalsa army crossed the river Sutlej. Lord Harding, Governor General declared war. At that time Khalsa army was without a general or any rate without any supreme controlling authority. Sikh army defeated under Lal Singh (Prime Minister) at the hand of Sir Hugh Gough at Mudki (1945). Under Tej Singh (Commander-in Chief), the British at Ferozpur (1845) defeated Sikh army. The Sikhs under Ranjir Singh Majithia defeated British army under Harry Smith at Buddewal (1846). Finally defeat of Sikhs by Smith at Aliwal and Sabroan (1846) (the second one being one of the hardest fought battles in Indian history) and crossed Sutlej and occupied Lahore by the British.
Results:

This war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Lahore (March 1846). The provisions of the Treaty were as follows:

- The Maharaja renounced all claims to the Sikh territories lying to the south of the river Sutlej.
- The Maharaja ceded all the territory lying between the Sutlej and the Beas River.
- Lahore Durbar was to pay an indemnity of one and a half crores of rupees. The Sikhs had only fifty lakhs of rupees. They gave the state of Jammu and Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh for one crore of rupees.
- Appointment of a British resident at Lahore (Sir Henry Lawrence) till the end of the war.
- The minor Dalip Singh was recognized as the ruler of Punjab and Rani Jindan as his regent and Lal Singh as wazir.
- Sikh army was reduced and it was not to exceed 22,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. Its rulers were prohibited from employing any European without the prior consent of the British.
- British troops were permitted to pass through Sikh territory whenever need arose.

Treaty of Bhairowal (1846):

After the Treaty of Lahore, things were not work smoothly. Lal Singh and some other Sikh leaders were opposed to the handing over of Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh (by the terms of the Treaty of Lahore). They encouraged the Governor to rise against the Gulab Singh. The British forces put down the revolt. Lal Sing was withdrawn from his position and sent to Banaras. Jammu and Kashmir was handed over to Gulab Singh. Soon after, the Treaty of Bhairowal (supplementary treaty) was signed in December 1846. Its terms were as follows:

- Rani Jindan was removed as regent and a Council of Regency was setting up for Punjab (consisting of eight Sikh Sarders and presided over by Sir Henry Lawrence).
Sikh will station a British force at Lahore for which the Sikhs had to pay Rs 22 lakhs.

Governor-General of India had powered to take and garrison at any fort in Punjab.

11.5.2 Second War (1848-49):

Causes:
The second Anglo-Sikh war was become inevitable as British were in the look out of an opportunity to capture Punjab. The following were the main cause for the second Sikh war.

- Sikh army desired to avenge their humiliation of the first war and Sikh Sardars were became discontentment with the British control over Punjab.
- Rani Jindan were badly treated by the British. She was first transported to Shaikpur and then to Benaras. British drastically reduce of her pension.

Figure 11.1

Source: Krishna Reddy, Indian History, p-c59
Mulraj, Governor of Multan revolted and murdered two English officers (Vans Agnew and Lt Anderson), who were sent to Multan to take over its administration. It enraged the British.

Sher Singh was sent by the British to suppress the revolt of Mulraj but he himself joined the revolt against the British. It became outbreak as a general rebellion by the Sikh army and the Sardars.

Sikhs also became friends with the Afghans by surrendering Peshawar. It jolted Lord Dalhousie and declared war and said, “The task before me is the utter destruction and prostration of the Sikh power, the subversion of its dynasty and the subjection of its people. This must be done promptly, fully and finally.” He declared it the “war of vengeance”

Courses:

A large British army under Lord Gough crossed the Ravi on 16 November and fought an indecisive Battle at Ramnagar with Sher Singh in 1848. Mulraj surrendered in January 1849 and the Sikhs suffered a defeat at Chillianwala (1849) a few weeks later. Gough in Gujarat (a town near the Chenab) won the final and decisive battle in 1849 against the Sikhs. Sher Singh and other Sikh chiefs and the army surrendered in 1849.

Source: Krishna Reddy, Indian History, p-c59
11.6 Annexation of Punjab

Lord Dalhousie completed annexation of Punjab in 29 March 1849. British gave a pension to Dalip Singh and sent to England along with his mother Rani Jindan for education. The administration of Punjab was entrusted to a Board of three Commissioners (Lawrence brothers – Henry and John and Charles G Mansel) in 1849 to administer Punjab. In 1853 Board was abolished and appointment a Chief Commissioner for Punjab (Sir John Lawrence – the first Chief Commissioner for Punjab).

The annexation of Punjab became an imperialistic design. Several historians criticized the British for their annexation of Punjab. Major Evans Bell described the annexation of the Punjab as inexpedient and avoidable and said that, “the annexation of the Punjab was no annexation, it was a sacred breach of trust.”

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Who was succeeded as the ruler of Punjab after Ranjit Singh?

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Q 11: Which Treaty ended the first Anglo-Sikh war?

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Q 12: In which year Treaty of Bhairowal was signed?

......................................................................................................

Q 13: Which was the decisive battle of Anglo-Sikh wars?

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Q 14: Who was the first Chief Commissioner of Punjab?

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that,

• Rise of Sikh community under the Sikh Gurus was followed by disorder in Punjab following the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali, particularly the last one in 1767.
Organization of the Sikhs into 12 misls (confederacies) in Punjab and Ranjit Singh born in a Sukarchakia misl in 1780, succeeded to the chieftainship in 1792 as a minor with his mother as the regent and assumed of full charge in 1792.

Capture of Lahore (1799) with the help of Jaman Shah of Afghanistan and Amritsar (1802) and gradual establishment of his control over all the Sikh misls west of the Sutlej.

For thwarting, a possible French advance into India British sent Metcalfe to negotiate a Treaty with Ranjit Singh and eventually Treaty of Amritsar was signed.

Conclusion of Tripartite Treaty by Ranjit Singh with Lord Auckland (Governor General of India) and Shah Shuja to invade Afghanistan and to place Shah Shuja on its throne was followed by the outbreak of the First Afghan War (1848-42).

Ranjit Singh established control over the neighbouring states of Dogras, Nepalese and Afghans.

After the death of Ranjit Singh, anarchy came into existence and first Anglo-Sikh war started.

Defeat of the Sikh army at Ferozpur (1845), Aliwal and Sobroan (1846) and crossed Sutlej and occupied Lahore by the British.

Treaty of Lahore (March 1846) and Treaty of Bhairowal (December 1846) was imposed upon Sikhs by the British.

Sikh army desired to avenge their humiliation of the first war led second Anglo-Sikh war, Lord Dalhousie annexed Punjab, and Sir John Lawrence became the first Chief Commissioner of Punjab.

11.8 FURTHER READING

1. Bipan Chandra: *History of Modern India*
2. Hermann Kukle; Dietmar Rothermund: *A History of India*
3. Philip Lawson: *The East India Company: A History*
4. Douglas M. Peer: *India under colonial rule: 1700-1885*
5. Sekhar Bandhopadhyay: *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*

6. B. L. Grover; S. Grover: *A New Look of Modern Indian History*

7. W Cooke Taylor: *A popular History of British India*

8. Percival Spear: *The Oxford History of Modern India (1740-1975)*

9. R. C. Majumdar: *(Volume-I / Volume-II) British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*

### 11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** March 1739

**Ans to Q No 2:** Ahmad Shah Abdali was the founder of the Durrani Empire of modern state of Afghanistan.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Sukarchakyia misl

**Ans to Q No 4:** January 1, 1806

**Ans to Q No 5:** River Sutlej became the boundary line between the territories of Ranjit Singh and the British.

**Ans to Q No 6:** Shah Shuja, Ranjit Singha and British were signatories of Tripartite Treaty.

**Ans to Q No 7:** Sansar Chand Katoch

**Ans to Q No 8:** Amar Singh Thapa was an Gurkha army General.

**Ans to Q No 9:** From Shah Shuja, the ruler of Afghanistan, Ranjit Singh took the famous Kahinoor diamond.

**Ans to Q No 10:** Kharak Singh

**Ans to Q No 11:** Treaty of Lahore (March, 1846)

**Ans to Q No 12:** In December 1846

**Ans to Q No 13:** Battle of Gujarat (1849)

**Ans to Q No 14:** Sir John Lawrence
11.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question in about 50 words)
Q 1: Who was the father of Ranjit Singh?
Q 2: In which year Tripartite Treaty was signed?
Q 3: Write any one term of the Treaty of Bhairowal?
Q 4: Which Governor General completed the annexation of Punjab?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)
Q 1: Write in short about the emergence of Ranjit Singh as the ruler of Punjab.
Q 2: Write shortly about the causes and result of first Anglo-Sikh war.
Q 3: Write shortly about the causes and results of second Anglo-Sikh war.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)
Q 1: Write about the Ranjit Singh’s relation with the British.
Q 2: Write about the Ranjit Singh’s relation with the neighbouring states of Punjab.
Q 3: How did the British annexed Punjab? Is it justifiable?
UNIT 12: CHANGES IN AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

Unit Structure

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Introduction of New Land Revenue Systems
12.4 Permanent Settlement
   13.4.1 Merits
   13.4.2 Demerits
12.5 Mahalwari System
   13.5.1 Merits
   13.5.2 Demerits
12.6 Ryotwari System
   13.6.1 Merits
   13.6.2 Demerits
12.7 Let Us Sum Up
12.7 Further Reading
12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.9 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able –

- Understand the basic features of Permanent Settlement,
- Analyse the merits and demerits of Permanent Settlement,
- Understand the Mahalwari Settlement,
- Analyse the merits and demerits of Mahalwari Settlement,
- Understand the basic features of Ryotwari Settlement,
- Analyse the merits and demerits of Ryotwari Settlement.
12.2 INTRODUCTION

In 1765 A.D., the East India Company acquired the Diwani or control over the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Initially the Company continued the old system of revenue collection through the zamindars. In 1772 A.D., Warren Hastings decided to manage the land revenue directly. He auctioned the right to collect revenue to the highest bidder. But this system was not successful. Though the amount of land revenue was pushed high by the zamindars and other bidders against each other, the actual collection varied from year to year and often less than the expectations of the Company’s officers. This introduced uncertainty in the Company’s revenues when it was hard passed for money. Besides, neither the cultivators nor the zamindars cared to improve cultivation. Therefore, in subsequent years Company introduced three different types revenue policies in different parts of India, they were- Permanent Settlement, Mahalwari Settlement and Ryotwari Settlement. In this unit we will study these land revenue policies in detail.

12.3 PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

The Battle of Plassey and Buxar had placed Bengal under the administration of the British East India Company. The Company was in need of money for the expansion and administration of its territories. Land Revenue was the main source of income at that time. In fact, nearly all the major changes in the administration and judicial system till 1813 were geared to the collection of land revenues. In the beginning Lord Clive introduced the system of Dual Administration for revenue collection in Bengal. In 1773, the Company decided to manage the land revenues directly. We have already discussed that Warren Hastings introduced a five years Settlement of land revenue by which the highest bidder would get the right of revenue collection for five years. In 1777, the system of bidding was made an annual affair. But his experiment did not succeed. During the time of auction the Zamindars and other speculators bid against each other. But actual collection
varied from year to year and never reached the expectation of the Company. So, it affected the Company’s revenue.

To deal with the situation Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in Bengal and Bihar in 1793. By this Settlement the Zamindars were made owner of the land in their entire zamindaris and they were to act as agents of the Government in collecting land revenue from the ‘ryots’. Their right of ownership was made hereditary and transferable. The Zamindars were to give 10/11th of the collected revenue to the Company, only 1/11th of the revenue collected they could keep for themselves. If the collection of revenue increases due to favorable circumstances, the Zamindars could keep the increased amount. But he had to pay his revenue rigidly on the due date even if the crop had failed for some reason. Otherwise his lands were to be sold.

The Permanent Settlement reduced the status of cultivators to mere tenants. They were deprived of their rights to the soil and other customary rights. Their right to use the pasture and forest lands, irrigation canals, fisheries and protection against enhancement of rent were taken away.

With the Permanent Settlement the Government was able to get a fixed income in place of earlier fluctuating income. It solved the financial problem of the Company. The servants of the Company were now relieved of the problem of periodical assessment and collection of revenue. Besides extension of cultivation, clearing of forest and increase of production led to the benefit of the ryots as well as Zamindars.

Merits of the Permanent Settlement

- It assured a regular income to the Company: As the system fixed the land revenue permanently, the Company knew well in advance the amount it would receive from land revenue. It thus gave stability to its finances. It facilitated the formulation of the budget by the Company as it was assured of a regular and fixed income.

- Promoted agriculture: The Permanent Settlement helped in the development of agriculture. Under the previous system, the zamindars took little interest in the promotion of agriculture because they were not certain of getting the land next year. But the Permanent
Settlement made the zamindars owners of land. They now took interest in promotion of agriculture and increase production.

- Landlords became rich: Under the Permanent Settlement, the amount payable by the landlords was fixed once for all but there were no limits with regard to collection of rents from their tenants. The landlords charged arbitrary rents from their tenants and became wealthy and prosperous.

- British created a loyal class of zamindars: As the landlords owed their wealth and prosperity to the British rule, they became its loyal supporters.

Demerits of the Permanent Settlement

- The chief among this was the failure on the part of the Zamindars to pay the high land revenue due to which a number of them surrendered their lands.

- No doubt the Company received a fixed income, but in the long run it proved to be disastrous. In course of time production greatly increased due to extension of cultivation and the Zamindars collected a very high amount, but the Company could not claim any part of this increased amount.

- The creation of a class of absentee landlords was a serious drawback. Many of them never visited their land or took interest in their zamindari. They left revenue collection to their agents and led an easy life in the city. The interest of the cultivator was totally ignored.

**ACTIVITY 12.1**

Write three differences between the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwari System:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference 1</th>
<th>Difference 2</th>
<th>Difference 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
Answer the following questions:

Q. No 1: Who introduced the permanent settlement in Bengal?

Q. No 2: In which year the permanent settlement was introduced in Bengal?

Q. No 3: Mention any one advantage of the permanent settlement.

12.4 MAHALWARI SYSTEM

Under the Mahalwari System introduced by the British, the unit for revenue settlement is the village or the mahal (i.e., the estate). The village land belongs jointly to the village community technically called ‘the body of co-share’. The body of co-shares are jointly responsible for payment of land revenue, though individual responsibility is also there. If any co-sharer abandons his land it is taken over by the village community as a whole. The village community is the owner of village ‘common land’ including the forest land pastures etc.

The Mahalwari System was adopted in modern Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and parts of Central India. The land revenue was fixed at a moderate rate. It could be revised after a period of 20-30 years. The system proved to be more beneficial to the big landlords than to the peasants and the tenants.

12.4.1 Merits of the System

- The rate of revenue was moderate under this system.
- The land belongs to the village community jointly and therefore the community as a whole was responsible for the payment of the land revenue to the government.
12.4.2 Demerits of the System

- The System was more beneficial to the big landlords.
- The System also encouraged developing a chain of landlords and money lenders between the peasants and the government.

12.5 RYOTWARI SYSTEM

Under this system registered holder of the land is recognised as the proprietor of the land and is held responsible for direct payment of land revenue to the state. He has the right over his land; therefore he can sell it, mortgage it or transfer it. State cannot interfere as the owner pays his land revenue to the state.

Ryotwari settlement was adopted in Madras after the failure of attempts to introduce the permanent settlement. There was no intermediary between the state and the peasant who owned the land and cultivated it. An accurate survey of each village, and village map with a descriptive register of all holdings was prepared. The land was classified according to its productive capacity. The land revenue was fixed in terms of money. The system did not aim at reducing the rate of land revenue but it could be changed from time to time. Actually the land revenue was increased continuously.

12.5.1 Merits of the System

- As there was no middle man between the peasants and the government, the peasants had to pay the accurate rate of land revenue to the government.
- As peasants were the owner of the land, so they could sell, transfer or mortgage their land at their own wish.
- The system benefitted the government more, as the rate of interest never decreased and it was very high.
12.5.2 Demerits of the System

- The rate of interest was too high under the system and peasants usually could not fulfil the revenue demand and they had to sell or mortgage the land to pay the revenue.
- In case of default in the payment of land revenue, the government could auction the land.
- There was no limit on the rate of interest to be charged by the moneylenders. Commenting on this system, R.C. Dutt remarks, ‘By Ryotwari, the nature of grip of the Company on Ryots was like that of master over his slaves. Company could take away all the means from the Ryots which were necessary for their subsistence.’

**LET US KNOW**

Features and Criticism of Land Revenue Policy of the British

- The main features of the various systems of land settlement introduced by the British was the existence of intermediaries between the government and the cultivators. These intermediaries were called by different names in different provinces. They were like landlords and were loyal to the government. They helped the government in times of need in various ways.
- According to these settlements, the zamindars and the peasants were made the owners of the land. Now the land could be sold, purchased or mortgage like other commodities. In this way the government could sell cultivator’s land to reorder the revenue demands of the state. It resulted in the improvement of the peasants. The government on one hand and the zamindars and moneylenders on the other began to exploit the poor peasants. In fact it shattered the whole rural economy.

It is thus clear that the main aim of the government was to extract as much land revenue as possible from the farmers. In pursuance of its
imperialist policies, it befriended the landlords and the moneylenders. The poor peasants never hope to get any assistance to improve their condition.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Choose the correct answer:

**Q. No 4:** The unit of revenue collection in a Mahalwari system was ryots/mahal/province.

**Q. No 5:** Mahalwari Settlement was introduced in Assam/Kerela/Uttar Pradesh and Central India.

**Q. No 6:** Ryotwari Settlement was introduced in Madras/Bihar/Punjab.

**12.6 LET US SUM UP**

After going through this unit, you have learnt-

- The merits and demerits of Permanent settlement,
- The features of ryotwari settlement,
- Merits and demerits of ryotwari settlement,
- Features of Mahalwari Settlement,
- Merits and demerits of Mahalwari settlement,
- The features of the British land revenue policies.

**12.7 FURTHER READING**

1. Bipan Chandra: *History of Modern India*
2. Hermann Kukle; Dietmar Rothermund: *A History of India*
3. Philip Lawson: *The East India Company: A History*
4. Douglas M. Peer: *India under colonial rule: 1700-1885*
5. Sekhar Bandhopadhyay: *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*
6. B. L. Grover; S. Grover: *A New Look of Modern Indian History*
7. W Cooke Taylor: *A popular History of British India*
8. Percival Spear: *The Oxford History of Modern India (1740-1975)*
9. R. C. Majumdar: *(Volume-I / Volume-II) British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*

**12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Answer to the question no 1: Lord Cornwallis
Answer to the question no 2: 1793
Answer to the question no 3: It assured a regular income to the Company
Answer to the question no 4: Mahal
Answer to the question no 5: Uttar Pradesh and Central India
Answer to the question no 6: Madras

**12.9 MODEL QUESTIONS**

A) VERY SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q. 1: What do you know about Mahalwari System?
Q. 2: Mention two merits of Ryotwari settlement.
Q. 3: Mention two reasons for the introduction of Permanent settlement.
Q. 4: In which region of India Mahalwari settlement was introduced?

B) SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q. 1: Briefly discuss the ryotwari settlement of land revenue.
Q. 2: Discuss the main features of British land revenue policies in India.

C) LONG QUESTIONS (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Analyse the main features of Permanent Settlement.
Q. 2: Discuss different types of land revenue collection under the English East India Company.
UNIT 13: TRIBAL AND PEASANT MOVEMENTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Tribal Movements
  13.3.1 Santhal Movement
  13.3.2 Munda Uprising
  13.3.3 Rampa Rebellion
  13.3.4 Tana Bhagat Movement
13.4 Peasant Movements
  13.4.1 Faqir and Sanyasi Rebellion
  13.4.2 Indigo Riots
  13.4.3 Pabna Agrarian Movement
  13.4.4 Deccan Riots
  13.4.5 Revolt of the Ramosis
  13.4.6 Moplah Uprising
  13.4.7 Champaran and Kheda Satyagraha
13.5 Peasant Movements in Assam
  13.5.1 Phulaguri Uprising
  13.5.2 Rangia and Lachima Revolt
  13.5.3 Patharughat Uprising
  13.5.4 Revolt in Jaintia
  13.5.5 Nagas, Garo and Lushai
13.6 Let Us Sum Up
13.7 Further Reading
13.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
13.9 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:
Discuss the factors responsible for the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857.

Describe the various events of the revolt and the role played by different native rulers as leaders of the revolt.

Trace the causes of the failure of the revolt.

Learn about the results of the revolt and determine its impact.

Understand the nature of the revolt and its repercussions.

**13.2 INTRODUCTION**

The grievances of the general masses and lower class people against the British colonial rule were expressed in the Indian subcontinent for the first time in the form of a revolt in 1857. Though historians often call the revolt of 1857 a Sepoy Mutiny or the first struggle of Indians against the British, yet we may say that the foundation stone of this struggle was laid by some of the popular resistance movements pursued by various tribal and peasants groups. They raised their voices against a system which discriminated against them. Peasants and tribals had their own reason to rise together against the colonial rule. To be very honest they were exploited by both the colonial Government and the landlords i.e. Zamindars. Due to the growing demand of land revenue the peasants became poor and were compelled to take loans, as well as to sell of their lands to the landlords. Loss of their lands led them to such an impoverished state that they stood up against the British. On the other hand the tribal resistance against British rule also had some valid cause. After occupying the native land of the tribals, the British administration declared tribal chiefs as Zamindars and not as their kings. Moreover they abolished old taxation and revenue system of the tribals which was a grave concern for the tribals, prompting them to raise slogan against the British rule. Due to the new administrative system introduced by the British government the tribal people start to lose their lands and were reduced to the position of agricultural labourer as well as rack-vented tenants on the land they cultivated. Thus a wave of resentment grew up against the British among the tribal people. Emergence of money
lenders, traders, contractors and the protection given to them by the colonial rule was always a matter of conflict between tribals and the British. Tightening of control by the British over forest zones for revenue purposes, religious activities of the Christian Missionaries in their areas, British efforts to suppress certain tribal traditions and practices viz., like human sacrifices etc. and British efforts to recruit unpaid tribal labour for menial work are some of the major causes of tribal movements in British India.

**LET US KNOW**

**Movement**: A struggle carried out by a group of people who share the same aims or ideas.

**Rebellion**: A revolt against the authority of an established government or ruler.

**Uprising**: An insurrection against an established ruler or government.

**Riot**: A violent public disturbance against the authority by a crowd of people.

### 14.3. TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

The tribal movements were isolated outbursts against local grievances which were primarily economic in nature. The primary target was local vested interests; British official agencies were drawn into these conflicts, because grave questions of law and order were generally involved. So the tribal movements cannot be looked upon as an aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle even though they occasionally had a political overtone. They are important from the historical point of view because they throw light upon the suffering of a section of the people who were not politically vocal and whom the politicians engaged in the struggle for freedom did not consider mobilizing against foreign rule. The tribals comprised of virtually 13% the total population in British India. For centuries they lived in isolation and enjoyed local autonomy and led an isolated life and a self-sufficient economy. Shortly after the foundation of British rule their autonomy and self-sufficiency were disturbed, leading to the rise and growth of as many
as 70 major tribal uprising in the 19th and early 20th century. These were however confined to the specific tribe and led by local tribal leader.

The British administration gave a severe blow to the tribal economy on account of its policy of land revenue settlement. Increasing official control of forest zones for revenue purposes adversely affected the socio-economic life of the tribes. They lost the opportunities of shifting cultivation. They lost customary rights of using forest land for grazing and using forest timber as fuel. They found themselves exposed to exploitation by forest contractors. Their traditional religious life disintegrated due to the spread of Christianity by European Missionaries. The tribals felt that one of the objectives of the British rule was to convert them to Christianity. This particularly happened in Bihar and the hill areas of Assam. It was under these circumstances that tribal uprising broke out against the British government. Here we have discussed some major tribal uprisings, which posed a major threat to the Company’s rule.

13.4.1. SANTHAL UPRISING

A major tribal resistance movement broke out just before the Revolt of 1857 in the Santhal area of Chollangpur in the present state of Jharkhand which was known as the Santhal Uprising. A major cause of their protest was the exploitation of the money lenders and intermediaries of the Zamindars. Confiscation of their properties as well as their lands compelled the Santhals to raise their voice against the British rule. Moreover, forced labour and sexual exploitation of tribal women at the worksites was also a greater concern of the Santhals. Under the leadership of Sidho and Kanhu, they stood up and defied their exploiters. On June 30, 1855 ten thousand Santhals assembled at Bhagadihi where they announced their war against then British. The latter was compelled to deploy the regular columns of the army to suppress them. The defeat of the British army under Major Burrough by the Santhals at the initial stage was a significant incident of the rebellion. However, the Santhals were finally suppressed by the British army by the
end of 1856. To prevent the Santhals from revolting in future, a separate district of Santhal Paragana was carved out by the Company.

13.4.2. MUNDA UPRISING

The Munda uprising of 1899-1900 led by Birsa Munda also known as Birsite was the greatest Tribal uprising of the 19th century. This uprising is often referred to as Ulgulum (the great tumult) in the Tribal language. Birsa Munda was a master tactician who raised a Munda Militia in which even Munda women joined. He declared the end of the Company's (British) rule from the Munda areas and announced the establishment of the Mundagiri i.e. the Munda Government. The Munda uprising was the only one in which women rebels fought alongside with their men giving a very strong resistance to the British. To suppress the rebellion, the British had to deploy the regular columns of the army. During the course of this uprising the Mundas attacked the symbols of British authority. However, the rebellious Mundas inspite of their indomitable courage were no match for the British. With the arrest of Birsa Munda and his subsequent death in prison, the Munda uprising collapsed. But it remained a great landmark in the history of Tribal movements.

13.4.3. RAMPA REBELLION

Rampa is a tribal region in the Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh that witnessed a tribal uprising in the 19th century. The tribals of Rampa revolted against the British due to the excessive exploitation by the latter. The British used them as unpaid labourers for the construction of forest roads which hurt the sentiments of the Rampa tribals. Their cause was supported by Alluri Sitaram Raju, who was the only non-tribal leader to lead a tribal uprising. He subscribed to the Gandhian ideology but believed that Gandhian methods were unsuited to the cause of the tribals. Consequently, Raju raised a Rampa Militia and waged veritable guerilla warfare against the British. The latter used great man power and spent a huge amount i.e.
roughly Rupees 15 lakhs to suppress this uprising which ended with the arrest and killing of Sitaram Raju in May 1924. But his supreme sacrifice aroused a Gandhian nationalist, who came forward to espouse the cause of the tribals. He was Thakkar Bapa, who founded the first All India Tribal Welfare Organisation named All India Adim Jati Sangha, the earliest and the most famous tribal organisation that voiced the tribals cause. Thus, it was with the Rampa uprising that the Tribal movement came to be integrated with the larger national movement. The cause of the exploited tribals was supported by the Gandhian nationalists who conceived the idea of tribal welfare.

**ACTIVITY 13.1**

Make a list of the leaders of different peasant and tribal uprising and mark them on a map of India.

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### 13.4.4. TANA BHAGAT MOVEMENT

**Sanskritization Movement:**

A movement through which a person is assimilated into the caste system of the Hindus, characterized by the use of Sanskrit for religious rituals.

The Tana Bhagat movement emerged among the Mundas and Oraons of Chottanagpur region of Jharkhand in 1920 under the leadership of tribal mendicants known as Bhagat. It is after them that the movement is known as Tana Bhagat. There were numerous Tana Bhagat movements which began initially as Sanskritization movements to revive the original religion of the Oraons. After the launching of the Non-cooperation movement, the Gandhian nationalists took interest in starting constructive work among the tribals which led to the linking of these movements with the local grievances and ultimately to the national movement.

Initially these movements grew up with the appeal of Tana Bhagat asking their followers to give up meat and liquor. In the second stage the movement was transformed into a powerful movement for internal reforms...
and over throw of the British. In 1920 the Tana Bhagats came under the fever of nationalism when they took part in the freedom struggle by picketing against liquor shops, holding demonstrations, staging Satyagrahas etc. It was during this phase that the nationalist symbols like honouring the poster of Bharatmata bearing the Gandhian cap, honouring the Congress flag etc, became matters of religions faith for the followers of the Tana Bhagat movement. It was a unique movement where tribals participated directly to the flow of national movement and the anti-British sentiments were expressed by the tribal through various methods and symbols.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:
Q.1: With which uprising were Sidho and Kanhu associated?
Q.2: Name the uprising led by Birsa Munda.
Q.3: Who founded the All India Adim Jati Sangha?
Q.4: Write True or False:
  a) The Rampa is a region of Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh  
  b) Alluri Sitaram Raju was the only non-tribal leader to lead a tribal uprising.
  c) Tana Bhagat movement emerged among Mudas and Santhals of Chottanagpur region.

13.4 PEASANT MOVEMENT

In spite of the fact that the Indian peasantry comprised of more than 80% of India’s population and were also the worst victims of British rule, the peasant movements in British India, before the launching of the Kishan Sabha movement were very few, and isolated in nature. This was because the British divided the peasantry into various land revenue settlement areas. So, the grievances of the peasants also differ from one region to another. The caste groups among farming community also became an obstacle in the way of a united struggle against British rule. Moreover, after the
introduction of the British land revenue settlement the autonomous Indian agrarian institutions like Panchayats and Gram Sabha had disappeared. A new leadership of the exploiter class, comprising of the Zamindars, moneylenders, Mahaldars etc. emerged. The Indian agrarian life did not have the inner mechanism to unite and raise its voice against exploitation. We can now begin our discussion by taking up some of the important peasants’ movements that occurred against the Company’s rule.

13.4.1. FAQIR AND SANYASI REBELLION

The Fakir and Sanyasi uprising led by wandering Muslim Fakirs and Naga Hindu Sanyasi was the earliest agrarian uprising shortly before the annexation of Bengal. As a result of continuous wars and famines, combined with British exploitation of the land and people, Bengal witnessed great economic distress and political unrest in the second half of the 18th century. A large number of uprooted and homeless people joined Hindu or Muslim groups known as Sanyasi or Fakirs who formed large communities and earned their livelihood from begging. The immediate cause of this uprising was the hoarding of food grains by the British leading to famine like condition causing immense miseries to the peasants. By 1772, there was a great Sanyasi rebellion encompassing a wide belt from Rangpur in Dhaka. The British attempted to contain them, especially as they had, by now, taken over the administration of Bengal, but found it a daunting task. Under their brave leader Manju Shah Fakir, the Sanyasis defeated a company of sepoys. This uprising which was confined to Bengal continued for more than three decades. It was after a great deal of effort that this uprising could be suppressed at the close of the 18th century when the Naga Sanyasis joined the third Anglo- Maratha war.

13.4.2. INDIGO RIOTS

Indigo was a commercial crop forced upon the peasantry by the Zamindars and British planters in the Zamindari areas of eastern India.
Peasants were kidnapped, illegally confined, women and children were attacked, cattle were lifted and crops were looted, burnt and destroyed if the peasants resisted its cultivation. At one point indigo cultivation was considered to be a symbol of India’s slavery. Finally, in 1860 the terribly oppressed indigo peasants launched “Non-Cultivation of indigo” movements. Beginning with the ryots of Govindpur village in Nadia district of Bengal, the indigo strikes rapidly spread to other areas. By the spring of 1860, it totally covered all the indigo districts of Bengal. Factories were attacked, as were policemen and police posts. The peasants even went on a strike, raised funds to fight the courts cases filed against them, and even initiated legal action on their own against the planters. Household servants of the planters were pressurized to leave the service of their employer through social boycott and caste pressures used by the indigo agitators. The indigo peasants got tremendous support from the intelligentsia and the press, as well as from the missionaries of Bengal. Outstanding in this respect was the role of Harish Chandra Mukherjee editor of Hindu Patriot. Dina Bandhu Mitra’s play ‘Neel Darpan’ was to gain great fame for vividly portraying the oppression by planters upon indigo farmers.

The ryots themselves showed tremendous courage and initiative as well as cooperation, organization and discipline. There was also complete Hindu, Muslim unity. Not being able to withstand the many sided, united resistance, the planters began to close their factories. The process was also hastened due to the government notification of November 1860 that the ryots could not be compelled to grow indigo in their fields. It also directed that all disputes should be settled by legal means. The ryots had soon a great victory, through for a limited and immediate cause. This was the first strike of the Indian peasants and it succeeded. However the last echo of the indigo agitation was heard when Gandhi launched Champaran Satyagraha in Bihar.

13.4.3. PABNA AGRARIAN MOVEMENT

In the permanent settlement areas of East Bengal (now in Bangladesh), the Zamindars used various methods to deprive the ryots of...
their occupancy rights. The peasants revolted when the Zamindars increased rent through cesses (tax) and tried to prevent them from acquiring the occupancy rights under the Act of 1859 through fraudulent measurement, illegal coercion and forced eviction. In May 1874, an Agrarian League was formed. The storm centre of the movement was Pabna, a comparatively prosperous jute-growing district where peasants under the Agrarian League protested against the unjust demands of the Zamindars. The main leader of this Agrarian League was Ishan Chandra Roy, Shambhu Pal and K. Mullah. Under the banner of this league the peasants of a number of districts of East Bengal launched a movement between 1870 and 1885.

The members of the Pabna league raised a litigation expenses fund, held mass meetings to which villagers were called by drumbeats, and organised a non-payments of rent campaign. The main form of resistance was legal and was generally peaceful. The Pabna unrest had two noteworthy features. First it provided a model for the peasants of combination at a time when there was no Kishan Sabha or political party to organize the peasantry. Secondly, it was non-communal. Though the majority of the Zamindars were Hindus and Muslims and formed a large part of the tenantry, yet Hindu peasants fought alongside their Muslims counterparts against the Hindu Zamindars. Many newspapers of the region, like Hindu Patriot and Amrita Bazar Patrika being Pro-landlord (sympathetic to landlords) opposed the peasants’ limited demands. They tried to portray it as a communal struggle of Muslim tenants against these Hindu landlords. But two prominent leaders of this movement Ishan Chand Roy and Shambhunath Pal were Hindus. Some other prominent leaders like R.C. Dutt also joined in favour of the tenants. R.C. Dutt also wrote a book “Peasantry of Bengal” in 1874 about this struggle.

The peasant discontent continued till 1885, a decade long struggle resulting in the passing of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. This Act ensured a limited protection to tenants from the worst aspects of Zamindari oppression. But it also gave rise to the powerful Jotedar groups. Some of them later turned but to be as exploitative as the Zamindars.
In the Ryotwari areas of the Deccan region, especially in the districts of Pune and Ahmednagar the land revenue was very high. Yet, it was periodically enhanced. The revenue demand of the British was required to be paid even when a succession of bad harvest followed. In addition, the cotton boom which had provided some prosperity to the peasants in the early 1860 disappeared overnight with the ending of the American Civil War in 1864 and the resumption of cotton supplies from that continent to Europe. The result was an acute depression in cotton exports from India and a crash in prices.

In these circumstances the peasants had nowhere to turn except money-lenders, most of whom were outsider Marwaris or Gujaratis. The latter exploited this situation to their advantage and obtained mortgage of a very large portion of land against rural loans. The situation became more and more explosive as the peasants were faced with the brutal alternative of mortgaging land or eviction. Some unscrupulous money-lenders even went to the extent of inducing or compelling the debtor peasants to compromise the honour of their women to get relief from the crushing burden of debts.

The Maratha peasants finally gave vent to their feelings and started social boycott of the moneylenders in Poona and Ahmednagar. They forcibly seized the debt bonds and set them on fire. The riots began in Sirur taluk in December 1874 and by September 1875; the Deccan riots affected 33 places in six taluks. There was, however, very little actual violence except the forcible seizure of debt bonds led by their traditional headman (Patels). In almost every case the object of the rioters was to obtain and destroy the debt-bonds, decreases etc in the possession of their creditors. Personal violence against them was used only when they refused to hand over these documents.

The uprising was completely crushed by the police assisted by the military, and nearly one thousand peasants were arrested. The Government of India also appointed a commission to inquire into the nature and cause
of these riots. The Commission unanimously held that poverty and consequent indebtedness of the cultivators were the real causes of the riots. Following the Commission’s recommendations, the Government passed the Agriculturists Relief Act 1879, which imposed restriction on alienation of peasants’ lands and on the Operations of the Civil Procedure Code. Consequently, the peasant could not be arrested and jailed for failure to pay debts.

13.4.5. REVOLT OF THE RAMOSIS

The Ramosis of Maharashtra once served in the inferior ranks of police in the Maratha administration. After the fall of the Maratha Kingdom, as a result of the Anglo-Maratha Wars, they reverted back to their lands and had to face considerable distress. Chittur Singh, who revolted in Satara in 1822 as a protest against heavy assessment, gathered the Ramosis under his banner. They played a prominent part in plundering the country and destroying its forts. In 1825 chronic scarcity in the Deccan further distressed them, and they broke into revolt in 1826 under the leadership of Umaji. For three years they scourged the countryside. Ultimately the British Government condoned their crimes gave them land grants and recruited them as hill police.

Later on, Wasudeo Balwant Phadke raised a force of Ramosis. Phadke’s feelings were deeply stirred by the devastation caused in western India by the terrible famine of 1876-77. He was convinced that the miseries of India were the consequences of foreign rule. With the support of backward communities like the Ramosis and ordinary, able bodied peasants of Maharashtra villages, Phadke organised social banditry or political dacoities on a significant scale. He was arrested in 1880 and died three years later (1883) in prison. His band of Ramosis remained active till 1887.
13.4.6. MOPLAH UPRISING

In the Malabar region, the discontent of the Muslim Moplah peasants acquired a religious flavour, giving a Hindu-Muslim angle to the expression of anti-landlord and anti-foreign discontent. Hindu upper caste Namboodiri and Nairjenmis position had been reestablished even vastly enhanced by the British tightening their grip over the Muslim Moplah peasantry. Retaliation and revolt become virtually endemic in many talukas of South Malabar and had a messianic tinge. Twenty-two revolts were recorded between 1836 and 1854; more uprisings took place in 1882-85 and again in 1896. The Moplahs were organised by the Congress and Khilafatist during the Non-Cooperation phase of India’s freedom struggle. A tenant’s rights agitation, developing in Malabar from 1916 was taken up by the Khilafat movement, after the Manjeri Conference of April, 1920. Promises of an imminent egalitarian Muslim State were made. The arrest of established Congress and Khilafat leaders like K. Mahadevan Nair, Gopala Menon, Yakub Hasan and P. Moideen Koya in February 1921 left the field clean for radical preachers.

On August 20, 1921, a police raid on Tiruraingadi Mosque in search of rebels sparked off a major rebellion with widespread attacks on police stations. However, public offices, communications and houses of landlords and poor Hindus were spared. The situation however changed when the British declared martial law. The Hindus, either under pressure or voluntarily, took a pro-authorities stance. The Moplahs now became anti-Hindu. They attacked and forcibly converted or murdered Hindus. What started as largely an anti-government and anti-landlord affair thus acquired strong communal overtones.

The Congress had already distanced itself from the Moplahs for their use of violence. In the British reprisals, by December 1921 unofficially over 10,000 Moplahs were killed and over 50,000 had either surrendered or were captured and the back of the revolt was broken.
**13.4.7. CHAMPARAN AND KHEDA SATYAGRAHA**

**Satyagraha:**

A philosophy of non-violent resistance movement put forward by Gandhi. The cultivators of Champaran district in Bihar in the 19th century had been forced by European planters to cultivate indigo on 3/20th of their holding known as *tinkathia* system. With the declining market for indigo in the face of synthetic dyes, the planters were now willing to release the farmers from their irksome crop but only by recurring enhancements in rent and other illegal dues. Persuaded by a local man Rajkumar Shukla, in 1917, Mahatma Gandhi offered civil disobedience and refused to leave the district when ordered. The British Government capitulated and Gandhiji ordered and inquiry which involved extensive touring and recording statements of thousands of peasants by men like J.B.Kriplani and Rajendra Prasad. The result was the abolition of the *tinkathia* system and compensation to the peasants for illegal increase in their dues.

Gandhiji’s intervention proved much more of a permanent success at Kheda district of Gujarat, where he went to alleviate the distress of the Kunbi Patidar peasants due to crop failure. Their appeals for remission of land revenue were being ignored by the Government. With the help of the leaders like Indulal Yajnik and Vallabhbhai Patel, Gandhiji toured the district advising the peasants to stand firm and withhold payment of revenue. After a hard struggle, the Government issued secret orders directing that revenue should be recovered only from those peasants who could pay and Gandhiji withdrew the movement in 1918.

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**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q.5: Match the following leaders with the movements they were connected with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>Movements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Ishan Chandra Roy</td>
<td>a) Revolt of the Ramosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Chittur Singh</td>
<td>b) Champaran Satyagraha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Rajkumar Shukla</td>
<td>c) Pabna Agrarian Movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.6: Choose the correct answer.
13.5.1 PEASANT AND TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN ASSAM

After the Revolt of 1857 the British Government of India tried in all possible ways to increase its revenue income. In Assam, agriculture being the main source of revenue, the burden of tax obviously fell on the peasants. Official records show that during the post-1857 period the British government increased the revenue demand by 3 to 4 times the original amount. The harmful effects of the excessive demand increased further due to the rigid manner of its collection. Moreover, the British government, in order to increase its income, imposed income-tax on the people of Assam in 1861. Introduction of various duties viz., stamp duty excise duty, tax for cutting timber etc. practically impoverished the peasantry beyond description. All this caused serious resentment among the general people, particularly the peasantry of Assam which led them to rise against the British government. As for the tribals, their discontent varied from region to region, but this constituted one of the main causes of discontent among the people in the plains. Again, in the hill region of Jaintia the people very duty, etc. by the British. But most of the hill tribes revolted due to political causes, namely, los much resented the imposition of house-tax, stamp s of their freedom. We can now begin a brief discussion by taking up some important peasant and tribal movements which broke out in Assam during British rule.

13.5.1. PHULGURI UPRISING

Raij Mel:

In Assam Raij Mels were actually village Panchayats or people’s assembly where members of a village use to discuss matters of common interest, particularly social and take a decision.
The Phulguri Uprising which is also known as ‘Phulguri Dhawa’ in Assamese was the first agrarian revolt in Assam after 1857. Phulguri is a place in present Nagaon district. Most of the people of this area belong to Lalung and Kachari tribes. As the people of Phulguri were mostly opium-eaters, the consumption of opium was higher there compared to other places. High price of opium fixed by the British government caused much resentment among the people of Phulguri. The ban imposed by the British government on private cultivation of opium also caused much dissatisfaction among the people of Phulguri. Besides, a rumour spread that the British government would soon impose duties on all their sources of income such as cultivation of betel leaf (pan) and cultivation of fruits in the garden.

Due to the above mentioned causes an uprising broke out which initially took the form of protest through Raij Melts. One day on 17 October, 1861 when people from district villages assembled in a mel the British police forcibly tried to disperse the villagemen. The incident enraged the native people so much that they jumped upon the police party who tried to disperse them. In this encounter many policemen were injured and Mr. Singer, the Assistant Commissioner of police of Nagaon district was beaten to death. However, an additional police force captured the rebels and their leaders were severally punished either with the death sentence or life imprisonment.

Though the Phulguri uprising was a failure its significance cannot be underrated. It was the first popular rebellion of the peasantry of Assam against the British colonial rule. For the first time the middle class intelligentsia came out in support of the Phulguri rebels. Not only that, it also served an inspiration to other villagemen and tribals. This is evident from the fact that within the next few years the peasants of the districts of Darrang and Kamrup broke out in rebellion against the exploitation of the British.

13.5.2. RANGIA AND LACHIMA REVOLT

The people of Rangia, in the district of Kamrup following the footsteps of the Phulguri peasants very soon lodged their protests, organizing Raij
Mels. The cause of their protest was a hundred percent increase in the land revenue. The Rangia revolt began on 24\textsuperscript{th} December 1893 when the people of Rangia ransacked the Rangia market. Moreover, people staged a demonstration on 10\textsuperscript{th} January, 1894 in which they raised the slogan of not paying the increased revenue. On the same day McCabe, the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup, imposed a ban on holding any Mels. All the important leaders of the revolt were soon arrested by the police and the revolt lost its edge.

The Lachima Revolt was also held due to the same reasons as that of Rangia. The only difference was that the rebels of Lachima took recourse to violence. They assaulted the revenue –collectors who were the agents of the British government. The incident took place in Kalpā, near Lachima, in the district of Kamrup on 21\textsuperscript{st} January 1894. The revenue collectors were so severely beaten by the villagers that one of them died. The infuriated British police immediately arrested as many as seventy-five villagers. But the agitated villagers soon freed the arrested persons from the custody of the police. This led to a major police crackdown on the village. Unable to sustain the torture the rebels ultimately had to give in and the revolt came to an end.

13.5.3. PATHARUGHAT UPRISING

Like Phulguri Dhawa the rebellion of Patharughat is also commonly known among Assamese as Patharughatar Ran i.e. the battle of Patharughat. Patharughat is a place in the Darrang district where a revolt broke out in 1894. Here also the grievances of the people were against the enhancement of the rates of revenue. Raji-Mels were held in which not only a protest was lodged against the increased in the rates of land-revenue but a warning was also issued to the villagers to the effect that no one should pay the increased revenue to the government. On 28\textsuperscript{th} January, 1894 when a police party went to the village to attach the property of a peasant cultivator, who was a defaulter, they were surrounded by a mob. Soon after the incident the rebels of Patharughat marched towards the police camp leading the
police to open fire. Many of the villagers died and were injured. It led to the complete suppression of the rebels of Patharughat by the British.

13.5.4. REVOLT IN JAINTIA

The tribal people of Jaintia burst out in rebellion when the British government imposed house tax and stamp duty. In fact, the tribal people were not accustomed to any such tax in the past. Therefore, they felt they lost their freedom to the British. So they raised their voice through a rebellion which lasted from 1860 to 1863. It was not before 1863 that the British government could restore law order suppressing the hill people.

Before the outbreak of this revolt the Khasi tribes in present Meghalaya also revolted against the British. The Khasi leader U. Teerut Singh, the Raja of Nongkhalo led this rebellion against the British. The background of the revolt was the construction of a road across the Khasi hills joining the two valleys of the Brahmaputra and Surma. Though Teerut Singh in the beginning approved the idea of the road, suddenly he became suspicious of British intentions. The Khasis got the impression that after the completion of the road the British would levy tax from them. So, under leadership of Teerut Singh they attacked the British officials posted there and killed them. The conflict between the Khasis and British continued for almost four years and ended with the surrender of Teerut Singh in 1834.

1.5.5. THE NAGAS, GAROS AND LUSHAIS

The Tribal people of Naga, Garo and Lushai hills were discontented upon the British not because of imposition of any tax but for the curtailment of certain rights being enjoyed by them for long time past. In fact these turbulent hill tribes were freedom loving people and could not tolerate any interference in their socio-economic life. But their frequent raids in the neighbouring areas which were under British possession made the government worry. To get rid of their attacks and raids the British government
became offensive towards them and in 1866 captured the hill tract of the Angami Nagas. The other Naga tribes also surrendered in course of time. In 1869 the Garo hills region was captured. Finally in 1898 the Lushai hills came under British rule.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.7: Choose the correct answer:
   i) Raij-Mel is Gaon Panchayat/Peoples Assembly/Peoples Court
   ii) Who imposed a ban on the Raij-Mel of the people after the Rangia revolt?

8. Fill in the blanks:
   a) The hilly tract of Angami Nagas were captured by the British in ....................
   b) The Assistant Commissioner of Police of Nagaon who was killed in “Phulguri Dhawa” was ..................
   c) The rebellion of Patharughat is commonly known in Assamese as ....................
   d) Teerut Singh was the Raja of ....................

13.6. LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that,

- Under the British rule the condition of general masses became so impoverished that they were compelled to raise their voice against the British.

- you have learned how peasants and tribal population of different areas of the Indian Sub-continent revolted against the British rule and why they revolted. Though these uprising took place in different places at different times yet the character of these uprising was same i.e. anti-British activities and opposition to British rule.

- In Assam also the peasants and tribal communities expressed their resentment by a series of violent protest by attacking the British administration. The peasantry of Assam showed their utmost courage and revolted against the British to protect their agricultural rights and their farming lands.
The tribal communities of Assam also expressed their grievances against the oppressive taxation system imposed by the British and caused heavy damages to the British through armed rebellions.

These uprisings, however, failed but they opened the door to create an anti-British feeling among the masses and made them conscious about the nationalist sentiments and ideas. It encouraged them to raise their voice against the British in the coming days.

13.7 FURTHER READING

2) Bipan Chandra: Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India, New Delhi, 1966.
3) Bipan Chandra (Ed): India’s Struggle for Independence, Delhi, 1988.
5) K. Chaudhuri: New History of Assam and India, Guwahati, 1997
6) Ranajit Guha: Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, Delhi, 1983.

13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question no 1. Santhal
Answer to the question no 2. Munda Uprising
Answer to the question no 3. Thakkar
Answer to the question no 4. a) True
   b) True
   c) False
Answer to the question no 5: (i)- (c)  
   (ii)- (a)  
   (iii)- (b)
Answer to the question no 6: (i) Eastern India  
   (ii) Dina Bandhu Mitra  
   (iii) 1879
Answer to the question no 7.  
(i) People’s Assembly  
(ii) Mc. Cabe, the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup

Answer to the question no 8.  
(a) 1866  
(b) Mr. Siger  
(c) Patharughatar Ran  
(d) Nongkha

14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) VERY SHORT QUESTIONS (ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN ABOUT 50 WORDS)

Q. 1: Name the drama of Dina Bandhu Mitra.
Q. 2: Under the “tinkathiya system” peasants were compelled to cultivate indigo in how much portion of the land?
Q. 3: Who was the main leader of the Munda Uprising?
Q. 4: Which was the first Peasant Uprising in Assam?

B) SHORT QUESTIONS (ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN ABOUT 150 WORDS)

Q. 1: Briefly discuss the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the Champarana and Kheda Satyagraha.
Q. 2: What was the significance of the peasant’s and tribal rebellion in Assam?
Q. 3: Write short notes on-
   a) Deccan Riots  
   b) Mophla Uprising  
   c) Phulaguri Dhawa

C) LONG QUESTIONS (ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN ABOUT 300-500 WORDS)

Q. 1: Write briefly about the tribal uprisings against British rule.
Q. 2: What were the effects and significance of the peasant uprisings?
Q. 3: Write about the peasant movements against the British rule.

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UNIT 14: REVOLT OF 1857

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives
14.2 Introduction
14.3 Causes of the Revolt of 1857
  14.3.1 Political Cause
  14.3.2 Socio- Religious Cause
  14.3.3 Economic Cause
  14.3.4 Military Cause
  14.3.5 Immediate Cause
14.4 Results of the Revolt of 1857
14.5 Nature of the Revolt of 1857
14.6 Let Us Sum Up
14.7 Further Reading
14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
14.9 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the factors responsible for the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857.
- Describe the various events of the revolt and the role played by different native rulers as leaders of the revolt.
- Trace the causes of the failure of the revolt.
- Learn about the results of the revolt and determine its impact.
- Understand the nature of the revolt and its repercussions.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The revolt of 1857 is considered as one of the most important chapters in the history of India and her people. The revolt shook the very
foundations of British rule. It began with a mutiny of the Indian Sepoys of the Company's army but soon involved civilians, the peasantry, artisans as well as all sections of the Indian people. With a series of local risings and civil disturbances in different parts of India, the mutiny of troops was not a rare occurrence in the history of British rule in India. The novelty of the 'Mutiny' of 1857 lay in the wide extent of the area which it covered and in its military potentiality. There was widespread discontent in the country and practically every class had grievances against the British rulers; but it is unlikely that any dissident group would have actually risen in revolt without a lead from the Company's Sepoys. The Sepoys had substantial grievances regarding their conditions of service, but it was the threat to their religion which actually provoked them into mutiny. The dread of conversion to Christianity worked as a nightmare upon their minds. At the initial stage at any rate, the sepoys were not intimidated by any patriotic feeling or nationalist sentiment. They were moved by a 'blind fury' against the Firingi who threatened their caste and religious faith. The upsurge of the sepoys was so deep and strong that it attracted the nearly the entire population to join them. Ultimately the sepoy mutiny turned into a 'national revolt'. The hatred of the people towards the Firingi was so bitter and spontaneous that historian W. H. Russell wrote “In no instance is a friendly glance directed to the white man's carriage…. Oh! That language of the eye! Who can doubt! Who can misinterpret it? It is by it alone that I have learnt our race is not even feared at times by many and that by all is disliked.

14.3 CAUSES OF THE REVOLT

Although the revolt began as a military rising and it appears to be a great sequel in the long series of a number of mutinies, its causes were deeply rooted in the changing conditions of the times. It drew its strength from several elements of discontent against British rule. After the battle of Plassey in 1757, the British captured Bengal and using it as a base they captured the entire business installations of the area and imposed their trade monopoly. But their policies brought a very sharp reaction from the
general masses consisting of the peasants, artisans, traders etc. It would not be wrong to say that the country was ‘ripe for rebellion’ in 1857. But the minds of the civil population of all classes and ranks, Hindus and Muslims, princes and people were agitated and disturbed by feelings of uneasiness and a vague apprehension. Let us go for a brief discussion of the causes of this revolt which almost swept away the British rule.

14.3.1 Political Cause

Dalhousie’s annexations disturbed the political equilibrium in the country and created widespread discontent in extensive regions. For this purpose he had introduced a new policy termed as ‘Doctrine of Lapse’. It was based on the presumption that the East India Company was the Supreme power in India and that all native states were subordinate to it. The Doctrine of Lapse made it obligatory on the issueless rulers of native states to get the sanction of the company before adopting sons to inherit their respective states. Lord Dalhousie himself asserted, “I hold that on all occasions where heirs natural shall fail, the territory should be made to lapse and adoption should not be permitted, excepting in those cases in which some strong political reason may render it expedient to depart from the general rule.” By his policy Dalhousie annexed the states like Satara in 1858, Jaitpur (UP) and Sambalpur (Orissa) in 1849, Baghat (a hill state south of the Sutlej) in 1850, Udaipur in 1852, Jhansi and Nagpur in 1853 and 1854 respectively. But the overthrow of the Nawab of Oudh (Awadh) and the proposal to remove the titular Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II from his ancestral palace in Delhi came as a shock to the Muslims. The annexation of several Hindu states created alarm among the Hindus. Abolition of titles and suspension of pensions of native rulers also caused discontent among them, especially the refusal to grant the pension to Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the last Peshwa Baji Rao II. This hurt the sentiments of a major portion of the Hindu population. The annexation of princely states was not a blow to the princely families alone. Families dependent upon the favour of the princes, officers attached to them, and
the men who worked in the Company’s services and armed forces. For example, the Nawab of Oudh was very friendly to the British rule and most of the Company’s sepoys were recruited from his state. When Oudh was annexed, the loyalty and dignity of the sepoys were hurt. Moreover, the increase of taxation in these states rudely affected the families of the sepoys, which was another reason for their resentment.

14.3.2 Religious Cause

The religious factors that led to the Revolt of 1857 are very important from the Indian point of view. The activities of the Christian missionaries who had introduced various religious programmes as well as welfare works often come into a conflict with Indian socio-religious practices. Therefore, a belief among the common people grew, that one of the objectives of the British rule, was to convert Indians to Christianity. As a major portion of the sepoys of the Company’s army were Indian, they were also affected by these feelings. After all they too were a part of Indian society and therefore, felt and suffered to some extent what other Indians did. For instance, at that time campaigns in the lands outside the boundaries of India viz. Burma (Modern Myanmar), Afghanistan, Persia, China, etc. were very unpopular among the Indian sepoys. Because, there was a notion among them that if they crossed the sea, they would lose their religion. Before the Revolt there was a mutiny of sepoys in Barrackpur (Calcutta) in 1824 in connection with their journey to Burma. In 1839 some of the sepoys protested when they were taken to Afghanistan.

Moreover, the socio-religious reforms of the British government created fear among the common people, violating their religious beliefs. The abolition of the custom of Sati, the legislation in support of widow remarriage and the opening of western education to girls were some of the reforms that made people suspicious. Taxation upon the lands belonging to religious installation viz., temples, mosques or other charitable institutions also made people furious. Hence it was obvious that both civilians and military
sentiments came together when the question of their religious sentiments were at stake.

### 14.3.3 Economic Cause

Ramification – Any of a large number of complex or unexpected results that follow and action or a decision.

British rule had resulted in important economic changes. This was primarily due to the disturbance of material interests caused by the ruin of indigenous industries, oppressive agrarian systems and the ramifications of a costly and sophisticated system of administration. Perhaps the most important cause of the general resentment was the economic exploitation of the British and destruction of village industries and handicrafts due to the one-way free trade policy of Britain. No doubt this policy enriched the East India Company but it led to the impoverishment of the Indian people. The British land revenue settlements also played a major role in this regard. To collect as much money as they could, the British introduced new land revenue systems which crossed the limit of oppression. Introduction of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal and the Ryotwari and Mahalwari systems elsewhere made the peasants destitute. Under the clauses of these settlements the peasants lost their lands and its proprietorship was handed over to the Zamindars and the so called money lenders, a group of brokers who collected the revenue on behalf of the former. Due to these new trends the farmers lost their traditional rights over their lands and turned into mere tenants. Loss of their lands to the money lenders due to the land revenue policies of the British particularly the Ryotwari System hurt the sentiments of the peasantry and their resentment grew day by day. The impoverished condition of the farmers is proved by the fact that between the period of 1770 to 1857, twelve major and numerous minor famines occurred in Bengal and its neighboring areas.

The British system of law and administration also played a vital role in ruining the peasantry and craftsmen of the country. The existing corruption in the administration left no stone unturned to hit poor economic
condition of these people. The police, petty officials and lower law courts favoured the money lenders at the cost of peasants. If the peasants went to the law courts to seek redressal of their grievances, they were bound to be totally exploited and finally to be a bonded labourer.

Moreover, the old zamindars also lost their zamindaris to the new class of urban-based absentee landlords due to the introduction of the zamindari or the permanent settlement and the strict manner of revenue collection by the British. The mutually beneficial relationship among lower administrative officials compelled these groups of people to support any movement which could free them from the British Raj.

14.3.4 Military Cause

The first spark of the Revolt of 1857 was lit by the sepoys of the Company’s disciplined and devoted army. After rendering services to the Company’s for so many years why the Indian sepoys took such a drastic step against British rule, is a matter of thorough analysis. First of all, the Indian sepoys were peasants in uniform. Hailing from an agrarian society these sepoys had strong feelings towards the farmers of the country. Their families back home were always dependent upon cultivation and they too were affected by the strict and harsh revenue policies of British. The sepoys always resented against the discrimination in payment and promotions. An Indian sepoy could never attain the pay of an English subaltern. Moreover, the European troops took no share in the tough ordinary duties of the service and were paid a higher salary than the Indian sepoys. Such discrimination adversely affected the sepoy’s morale. The derogatory behavior meted out to the Indian sepoys was also a matter of great concern. The European officers of the army always used deregulatory words to while referring to the Indian sepoys and called them as niggers. Apart from general grievances the ‘Mutiny’ of 1857 was precipitated by several factors. For instance, the General Service Enlistment Act of Lord Canning in 1856 made it compulsory for all recruits to be ready for service both within and outside India i.e., across the seas. It created wide spread resentment among the sepoys as
they regarded it as a threat to their religion. Despite his valour and fighting skills the Indian sepoys are not promoted above the rank of Subedar. The annexation of Oudh hurt the feelings of those sepoys who came from the Nawab’s territory. They had some sympathy for the ruling house and many of them enjoyed petty privileges under it which were not recognized by the new British rulers. All these led to disaffection among the sepoys which manifested itself on a number of occasions in the form of mutinies before 1857.

14.3.5 Immediate Cause

The situation among the sepoys was so tense that they were ready to raise slogans against their masters at any moment. In an atmosphere of mounting discontent, the introduction of the new Enfield rifle precipitated matters. The cartridges used in this rifle were greased with beef and cow fat and required biting before they could be used. Though the British authority denied this fact of greased cartridges, sepoys were quite confident about their allegations and doubt. The English historian Sir Kaye writes, “There is no question that beef fat was not in the composition of this tallow.” A factory for manufacturing the cartridges was set up near Dum Dum (Kolkata). The Company’s records tell us that a contractor undertook to supply cow’s fat at the rate of four annas a seer. This matter affected not only the caste ridden Hindus but also the Muslim in the army. Now they had a firm belief that the government was deliberately trying to destroy their religion. This led to the mutiny of Mangal Pandey, a sepoy of the native infantry stationed at Barrackpur on 29th March 1857. He attacked his senior officer Lieutenant Baugh and severely wounded him. Thus the resentment of the sepoys expressed itself just before the beginning of the Revolt.

The revolt of 1857 began on 10 May, 1857 with the mutiny of the Sepoys at Meerut (in present Uttar Pradesh) but soon it engulfed wide regions and the people. In fact the participation of the feudal lords, native rulers, etc. increased the intensity of the Revolt and it was no longer confined to the sepoys alone. At Lucknow, Begum Hazrat Mahal, the widow of Nawab
Wazid Ali Shah raised the banner of rebellion. At Kanpur, Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the last Peshwa Baji Rao II, living in exile, revolted along with his lieutenant Tantia Topi. In Bihar, Raja Kunwar Singh, a zamindar of Arah became the oldest rebel leader aged 80 years. He provided greatest support to other rebel leaders. Rani Laxmibai, widow of Raja Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi, raised the banner of rebellion. She was the bravest leader of the rebellion who fought like a true heroine. Though she was killed by the British army, Sir Hugh Rose, the commander of the British army who defeated her called her the bravest and greatest of the rebel leaders. In Assam also the message of the Revolt of 1857 was carried by Maniram Dewan, an Assamese noble and ex-chief Executive or Dewan of the Assam Tea Company.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q. No 1: Who introduced ‘Doctrine of Lapse’?

Q. No 2: Mention the immediate cause of the revolt of 1857.

Q. No 3: Who was the father of Nana Saheb?

Q. No 4: Who carried the message of the revolt of 1857 in Assam?

14.4 RESULTS OF THE REVOLT

The revolt of 1857 lasted only for a few months. The British mobilized forces from Eastern (Bengal), Western (Bombay) and Southern India and suppressed the rebellion. In July 1857, British troops captured Kanpur and Bitnur where Nana Saheb was stationed. He escaped to Nepal and never came back. In September 1857, Delhi fell to the British troops. The British under General John Nicholson recaptured Delhi. The so called last Mughal
Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar who was crowned Emperor of India by the rebels was subdued by the British. His three sons were executed before his eyes by the order of Lieutenant Hudson. Bahadur Shah was court-martialed and sentenced to life imprisonment and later exiled to Burma (Myanmar). Lucknow was recaptured in March, 1858. Begum Hazrat Mahal who administered Lucknow in the name of her son Birjis Kadr escaped to Nepal. Jhansi was recaptured by Sir Hugh Rose on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1858 and Laxmibai fled to Gwalior. The soldiers of Gwalior joined Rani Laxmibai and Tantia Topi and continued the war against the British. But Hugh Rose followed Laxmibai there. On June 17, 1858, she was defeated and killed at Kota Ki Sarai near Gwalior. The last rebel leader who continued to resist against the British was Tantia Topi, who, because of the treachery of a Zamindar was captured by the British. He was tried and sentenced to death on April 15, 1859. Thus by early months of 1859 the revolt was completely suppressed by the British.

There were a number of causes which led to the failure of the revolt. The revolt lacked universal support. Various sections of the society remained alienated. Zamindars, princes, merchants, the intelligentsia did not participate in the revolt. Even in the case of the sepoys, not all the regiments revolted. The revolt was confined to only a small part of North India. The other regions were quite unaware of the happening there.

The revolt lacked a central and effective leadership. The strength and energy of the sepoys could not be channelled. The protests very soon became disorganized and directionless. Moreover, lack of unity among rebel leaders as well as sepoys led to the collapse of the revolt. People who joined hands with the sepoys and rebel leaders had different motives and interests and at times did not trust one another.

The revolt was poorly organized. There was no unity of action and coordination. Absence of a planned programme and strategy was quite visible among the rebels. Evidence indicates that many a time the sepoys acted like an unruly mob.

The British utilized to their advantages the means of contemporary scientific developments, particularly in the communication network viz.,
railways, postal and telegraph system etc. This facilitated exchange of information among the officers of the British army to counter the rebellions quickly. Moreover, modern and sophisticated weapons used by the British troops made it an easy task to defeat the rebels.

The rebel leaders had grossly underestimated the might of the British Empire. Inspite of the revolt the British rule remained intact in a large part of India from where the British deployed their military contingent. This additional military supply helped a lot to suppress the rebellion. The rebel leaders were no match for the British.

14.5 NATURE OF THE REVOLT

The year 1857 marks a century of the first step in the direction of establishing British paramountcy in India i.e. from the battle of Plassey to the annexation of Punjab, Avadh, and Lower Burma by Lord Dalhousie. It was this fulfillment of British paramountcy which was challenged by the Indian people through the revolt of 1857. Though it confined to a small part of north India the revolt of 1857 was the first massive challenge and an uprising to overthrow the British.

The Anglo-European historians called the revolt of 1857 as the ‘Mutiny’. G. B. Molleson over emphasizing on this point calls it ‘Nothing but a sepoy mutiny’. According to them the military discontent, particularly the so called issue of greased cartridges was the main cause for the so called mutiny. The mutiny according to these historians was ignited by the discontented soldiers of the British army who were of Indian origin.

With the growth of nationalist ideology in the last quarter of the nineteenth, the so called mutiny came to be regarded as the ‘First War of Indian Independence’. The eminent revolutionary V.D. Savarkar in commemoration of the revolt of 1857 wrote a book of the same title ‘The Indian War of Independence, 1857’ published in 1909 in which he called the revolt as the first war of Indian independence. This view was partially supported by Dr. S.N. Sen and S.B. Chaudhury. In fact, many Indian historians accepted this view of Sarvarkar to popularize the nationalist sentiment of the people.
However two distinguished Indian historians Dr. R.C. Majumdar and Dr. Tara Chand propounded two new theories in this regard. They repudiated to the view of V.D. Savarkar. Dr. Majumdar stated that on the whole it is difficult to conclude that the Revolt of 1857 was the First National War of Independence because the feeling of nationalism among the Indians had not yet developed at that time. Dr. Tara Chand in the book ‘The History of Freedom Struggle’, Vol. II, also states “It has to be admitted that war against the British was not inspired by any sentiment of nationalism, for in 1857 India was not yet politically a nation.”

The Marxist view of the revolt regards it as a soldier-peasant struggle against feudal bondage. It contends that the Indian soldier was a peasant in uniform revolting wanted to overthrow the feudal domination of the British.

Bahadur Shah was declared as a King of Hindustan by the rebels just after the outbreak of the revolt. But his rule till the suppression of the revolt remained confined to Delhi and its surrounding areas. He totally failed to co-ordinate the efforts of the rebel leaders. This lack of a centralised leadership exposes the absence of a planned and progressive character of the rebels, whose motto was to establish a new regime for the people of Hindustan.

We have discussed only some of the interpretations and divergent views about the nature of the rebellion. The outbreak could be called nationalist as both Hindus and Muslims participated in equal measure and there was close cooperation between the two communities. However the revolt remained confined to a part of North India and the concept of a common nationality was missing among them. Moreover, the Jat, Maratha, Rajput and the Sikh communities did not join the rebels. The rebellion was primarily inspired by anti-British sentiments rather than by a spirit of nationalism.
CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q. No. 5: Who was Bahadur Shah Zafar?

Q. No. 6: Mention one reason for the failure of the revolt of 1857.

Q. No. 7: Mention two leaders of the revolt of 1857.

Q. No. 8: Name the scholar who termed the revolt of 1857 as the first war of Indian Independence.

14.6. LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt

- Under the British rule the condition of general masses became so impoverished that they were compelled to raise their voice against the British.
- The various causes responsible for the outbreak of the revolt of 1857.
- The nature of the revolt.

14.7 FURTHER READING


14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question no1: Lord Dalhousie

Answer to the question no 2: Introduction of new Enfield rifle by the British was the immediate cause of the revolt of 1857.
Answer to the question no 3: Peshwa Baji Rao II
Answer to the question no 4: Maniram Dewan
Answer to the question no 5: Bahadur Shah Zafar was the Last Mughal emperor in India.
Answer to the question no 6: One of the causes for the failure of the revolt of 1857 was that there was no central leader.
Answer to the question no 7: Rani Laxmi Bai and Tantia Topi
Answer to the question no 8: V.D Savarkar

14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) VERY SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question in about 50 words)
Q1. Mention the military causes of the Revolt of 1857.
Q2. Mention the religious causes of the Revolt of 1857.
Q3. Name the states annexed by the policy of Doctrine of Lapse.
Q4. Mention two results of the revolt of 1857.

B) SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question in about 150 words)
Q1. Write about the nature of the Revolt of 1857.
Q2. Give a brief account of the regional leaders of the Revolt of 1857.
Q3. Write a short note on Doctrine of Lapse.

C) LONG QUESTIONS (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)
Q1. Discuss the causes of the Revolt of 1857.
Q2. Discuss the results of the Revolt of 1857.
Q3. Why does the revolt of 1857 also known as Sepoy Mutiny? Discuss.

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13) Spear, Perceival (1997) : *The Oxford History of India*. OUP.