

IMPORTANT QUESTION CLASS – 12 HISTORY CHAPTER- 10 REBELS AND THE RAJ THE REVOLT OF 1857 AND ITS REPRESENTATION |

Question 1.

Examine how Lord Dalhousie's policy of annexation created dissatisfaction amongst the people of Awadh.

Answer:

The Nawab of Awadh had been loyal to the British East India Company from the very beginning. But, the loyalty of Awadh was of no significance to Lord Dalhousie's imperialistic ambitions. Awadh could not be annexed on the basis of the Doctrine of Lapse as Wajid Ali Shah, as the Nawab of Awadh had several successors. So, the British especially Lord Dalhousie used a number of mischievous tricks to annex the Awadh and dispossessed the taluqdars.

These were:

- On 13th February, 1856, Awadh was annexed to the British empire on the grounds of maladministration.
- Nawab Wazid Ali Sahib was sent to Calcutta with an annual pension of ₹ 12 lakh. With the dissolution of the royal administration, large number of courtiers, officials and taluqdars became jobless.
- Jagirs of taluqdars were confiscated. This upheaval was aggravated by immediate material losses.
- The British were not willing to tolerate the power of the taluqdars.
- With the removal of Nawab, all taluqdars of the Awadh were also dispossessed, taluqdars were disarmed and their forts were destroyed.
- With a new revenue system i.e. Summary Settlement, taluqdars lost their very large share of revenue from land. Wherever possible, taluqdars were removed and settlement was done directly with peasant.
- British believed that this would increase the flow of revenue to the company and peasants would also be freed from oppression of taluqdar. This annexation of Awadh meant complete break down of social order.

Question 2.

With the help of specific examples examine the nature of Indian leadership that emerged against British in the revolt of 1857.

Answer:

During the revolt few leaders participated very enthusiastically while some other participated because they had no choice. They had to participate in the revolt for the sake of their reputation.

For e.g. Bahadur Shah was reluctant to join the rebellion but due to demands of sepoys, he joined the revolt and it was fought under his name. Similarly, sepoys and people of Kanpur choose

Nana Sahib as their leader and he joined the revolt.

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi participated because her kingdom had been annexed to empire by 'Doctrine of Lapse' and there was also popular pressure on her to take the leadership. In Awadh, there was deep resentment against annexation, dispossession of Nawab and oppressive rule of British. People of Awadh declared Birjis Qadar, the young son of dispossessed Nawab as their leader.

Apart from the royal families, local leaders also emerged during the revolt like Kuwar Singh in Arrah, Fakir in Lucknow, Shah Mai in Barout and Gonoo, a tribal cultivator in Singhbhum. Although the leaders of 1857 revolt participated in this war, but they had separate goals which made the revolt unsuccessful against British.

Question 3.

Examine the repressive measures adopted by British to subdue the rebels of 1857.

Answer:

It was not easy for the Britishers to suppress the revolt. Even then they took various steps to crush the rebels.

These steps were as follows:

Passing of Laws to help the Troops:

The British passed several laws to help the troops before sending them to re-occupy North India. The military officers were also empowered to try and punish the rebel Indians. The ordinary process of law and trial were ignored by them.

With the help of new laws and the new reinforcements coming from Britain, the 'British started the process of suppressing the revolt. British thought to reconquer Delhi was most important to suppress the revolt. Therefore, in June 1857, the British attacked Delhi from two directions. Captain Hudson arrested the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II and Begum Zinat Mahal from the Tomb of Humayun on 21st September, 1857.

Resorting to Diplomacy:

The British while resorting to diplomacy kept away the educated Indians and zamindars from the rebels. The British created a rift between rebels and the zamindars by promising the latter to give back their estates.

Use of Military Power on a Gigantic Scale:

The British used military power on a gigantic scale. But, this held their absolute control over the means of communication. Their control over the railways enabled them to send quick military support to different parts of the country’.

Communication System:

The telegraph system helped the British to get timely information about the incidents occurring in different parts of the country. Consequently, they were successful in wrecking plans of the rebels by taking immediate action against them. Thus, the British tried their best to maintain their absolute control over the means of communication in order to suppress the revolt.

Question 4.

Examine the provisions of ‘Subsidiary Alliance System’ devised by Lord Wellesley in 1798 for India.

Answer:

The Subsidiary Alliance was introduced by Lord Wellesley in 1798. All those who entered into such an alliance with the British had to accept certain terms and conditions.

These were:

- The British would be responsible for protecting their ally from external and internal threats to their power.
- In the territory of the ally, a British armed contingent would be stationed.
- The ally would have to provide the resources for maintaining this contingent.
- The ally could enter into agreements with other rulers or engage in warfare only with the permission of the British.

Question 5.

“The relationship of the sepoys with the superior white officers underwent a significant change in the years preceding the uprising of 1857”. Support the statement with examples.

Answer:

The white officers made it a point during the 1820s till 1840s to maintain friendly relations with the sepoys.

These were as follows:

- Several white officers could speak in Hindustani easily and were also familiar with the culture and traditions of the country.
- The relationship of sepoys with their British officials underwent significant change. In the decade of 1820, British officers stressed on maintaining friendly relations with the sepoys.
- Prior to the revolt of 1857, the relationship of the sepoys with white officers made it a point to keep friendly relationship with the sepoys. They would actively took part in their leisure activities.
- Despite this in the 1840s, the balance of mutual relationship changed drastically. The white officers created a sense of superiority and started keeping the sepoys as their racial inferiors.
- The equation of superior and inferior changed the whole script of mutual relationship. The elements of abuse and physical violence became routine activities. Consequently, the distance between sepoys and officers became wider. Due to this, mutual suspicion cropped up.

Question 6.

How did the rebels in 1857 try to materialise their vision of unity? Explain briefly.

Answer:

The revolt tried to garner the support of all sections of the society irrespective of their caste and creed. The rebellion was viewed as a war in which both the communities as Hindus and Muslims stood equally to gain and lose. The amicable relations which existed between the two communities were emphasised. The ishtehars brought to the forefront memories of the pre-British Hindu-Muslim past and glorified the coexistence of different communities under the Mughal Empire.

Thus, religious differences were not visible between the two communities in 1857 despite British attempts to create a wedge between them. Through this way, they tried to materialise their vision of unity.

Question 7.

“The rumours in 1857 began to make sense when seen in the context of the policies pursued by the British from late 1820s”. Support your answer with evidence.

Answer:

The rumours in 1857 that made sense in context of the policies pursued by the British from late 1820s were as follows:

- During the Governor-Generalship of Lord William Bentick some specific policies were adopted in order to ‘reform’ Indian society by the introduction of Western education. Western ideas and Western institutions.

- Reforms like the abolition of Sati System.
- Annexation of Jhansi and Satara-British refused to recognise adoption.
- Reforms like Widow re-marriage Act.
- Reforming socio-religious customs like land holding, inheritance, etc.
- Rumours had an impact on the minds of people under these uncertain times.

The common Indians looked at all these steps with apprehension and suspicion. Visual images and literature as much as the writing of history have helped in keeping alive the memory of the revolt of 1857.” Assess this statement. (All India 2008)

Question 8.

Describe how the British celebrated those, 9. whom they believed saved the English and repressed the rebels during the Revolt of 1857?

Answer:

The British celebrated those whom they believed saved the English and repressed the rebels during the revolt of 1857 by the various types of paintings which were meant to provide a range of different emotions and reactions also.

In an example of this type, ‘Relief of Lucknow’, which has been painted by Thomas Jones Barker in 1859 is particularly remarkable in this regard.

Henry Lawrence, the Commissioner of Lucknow, gathered all the Christians and took refuge alongwith them in heavily fortified residency after the rebel forces besieged Lucknow.

Lawrence was killed, but the residency continued to be defended under the command of Colonel Inglis. On 25th September, James Outram and Henry Havelock arrived out through the rebel forces and reinforced the British Garrisons. Collin Campbell reached with huge reinforcements and rescued the besieged British Garrison. In British accounts, the siege of Lucknow became a story of survival heroic resistance and the ultimate triumph of British power.

The arrival of Collin Campbell has been depicted as an event of celebration in Jones Barker’s painting. Campbell, Havelock and Outram, the three British heroes have been painted in the middle of the canvas.

The victorious figures of the heroes in the middle symbolise the re-establishment of British power and control is the main objective of these paintings and was to reassure the English in the power of their government. These paintings clearly conveyed the message that crisis was over and the revolt had been quelled and the British had succeeded in re-establishment of their power and authority.

Question 9.

Visual images and literature as much as the writing of history have helped in keeping alive the memory of the revolt of 1857.” Assess this statement.

Answer:

The writing of history, art and literature contributed remarkably to immortalise the sacred memory of the struggle of 1857. The leaders of revolt were presented as heroes taking the country towards the battlefield. They were depicted as heroes inspiring the common masses to begin struggle against the oppressive colonial power.

Many heroic poems were composed narrating the bravery of Laxmi Bai, holding a sword in one hand and the reins of the horse in the other, fought for the independence of her motherland. She was usually portrayed in battle armour with a sword in hand and riding a horse symbolising the determination to resist injustice and alien rule.

Thus, it becomes clear that visual representations produced various images of the revolt. We should know that these images were not a mere expression of contemporary ideas and sentiments, but they also reflected the contemporary sensibilities.

Question 10.

“Rumours and prophecies played a part in moving the people into action during the revolt of 1857.” Examine the statement with rumours and reasons for its belief.

Answer:

It is true that rumours and prophecies played a part in moving people to action during the revolt of 1857.

These rumours were as follows:

1. During 1857 revolt, there was an apparent rumour that the Indian sepoys were intentionally given the Enfield rifles, and its bullets were coated with the fat of cows and pigs and biting those bullets would corrupt their caste and religion.
2. The British tried to explain to the sepoys that this was not the case but the rumour that the new cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs which spread like wildfire across the sepoy lines of North India.
3. This is one rumour whose origin can be traced. Captain Wright, commandant of the Rifle Instruction Depot, reported that in the third week of January 1857 a ‘low-caste’ Khalasi who worked in the magazine in Dum Dum had asked a Brahmin sepoy for a drink of water from his lota. The sepoy had refused saying that the Tower caste’s touch would defile the lota. The Khalasi had reportedly retorted, “You will lose your caste, as ere long you will have to bite cartridges covered with the fat of cows and pigs”.
4. The truthfulness of the report had not identified but once this rumour started no amount of assurances from British officers could stop its circulation and the fear of it spread among the sepoys.

5. This was not the only rumour that was circulating in North India at the beginning of 1857. There was the rumour that the British government has hatched a gigantic conspiracy to destroy the caste and religion of Hindus and Muslims.

It is seen that rumours reflect about the minds of people who believed them, their fears and apprehensions, their faiths and convictions. Rumours circulate only when they resonate with the deeper fears and suspicions of people. The rumours in 1857 begin to make sense when seen in the context of the policies the British pursued from the late 1820s. The reasons of believing in these rumours are discussed below:

- From that time under the leadership of Governor General Lord William Bentinck, the British adopted policies aimed at 'reforming' Indian society by introducing Western education, Western ideas and Western institutions. With the cooperation of sections of Indian society they set up English-medium schools, colleges and universities which taught Western sciences and the liberal arts.
- The British established laws to abolish customs like sati (1829) and to permit the remarriage of Hindu widows.
- The British annexed not only Awadh, but also Jhansi and Satara. Once these territories were annexed, the British introduced their own system of administration. The impact of this on the people of North India was profound.
- It seemed to the people that all that they cherished and held sacred from kings and socio-religious customs to patterns of landholding and revenue payment was being destroyed and replaced by a system that was more impersonal, alien and oppressive.
- This perception was aggravated by the activities of Christian missionaries. In such a situation of uncertainty, rumours spread with remarkable swiftness. And people started to believe in these rumours during the revolt of 1857.