

CHAPTER – 05
When People Rebel
❖ LET'S RECALL

Question 1:

What was the demand of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi that was refused by the British?

Answer:

When the husband of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi died she demanded that her adopted son should be recognized as the heir to the kingdom. This demand of her was refused by the British. Ultimately, the Company annexed the kingdom as per the Doctrine of Lapse.

Question 2:

What did the British do to protect the interests of those who converted to Christianity?

Answer:

The British believed that Indian society had to be reformed. New laws passed to stop practices like Sati and child marriage. Widows were encouraged to marry again.

Following were the steps that the British did to protect the interest of those who converted to Christianity:

a) After 1830, the Company allowed Christian missionaries to function freely in its domain and even own land and property.

b) In 1850, a new law was passed to make the conversion to Christianity easier than the Indians who had converted to Christianity can inherit the property of their ancestors.

Question 3:

What objections did the sepoys have to the new cartridges that they were asked to use?

Answer:

After the death of young soldier, Mangal Pandey, some sepoys of the regiment at Meerut refused to do the army drill using the new cartridges.

The sepoys had raised the following objections when they were asked to use new cartridges:

(i) The cartridges used for new rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. It is a great insult to the regions of Indian sepoys—the Hindus as well as the Muslims.

(ii) It appeared to the Indian soldiers that the great aim of the English was to turn all the sepoys into Christians, and they had therefore introduced the cartridge in order to bring this about, since both Mohammedans and Hindus would be defined by using it.

(iii) Their religious sentiments were affected and this was the main reason that they refused to use the new cartridges.

Question 4:

How did the last Mughal emperor live the last years of his life?

Answer:

1. The last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II (or Bahadur Shah Zafar) lived a miserable life in his last time.

2. After the death of Aurangzeb, Mughal emperors held only symbolic value.

3. During the 1857 revolt, the rebels needed someone who would rule the land once the British were thrown out of the country. They decided that it would be the Mughal emperor. Though at first Bahadur Shah was a reluctant leader but he played important role in the rebellion.

4. Bahadur Shah sent letters to all small rulers and chieftains to come forward and support the rebellion. But when the British captured Delhi in September 1857 A.D. Bahadur Shah left Lucknow, from there he continued his fight against the British.

5. Towards the end when the revolt was suppressed, his sons along with some other rebels were captured by the English. His two sons and a grandson were shot dead before his old eyes. Their dead bodies were hanged at the Khooni Darwaja, Delhi to create terror among the rebels.

6. Bahadur Shah himself was deported to Rangoon where he died in 1862 A.D. His last words were “Zafar was really unfortunate for he could not get six feet grave in the street of his beloved country.”

❖ LET'S DISCUSS

Question 5:

What could be the reasons for the confidence of the British rulers about their position in India before May 1857?

Answer:

After the 100 years of conquest and administration British were reluctant to any rebellion in India as they were able to localize them then and there. They never thought that the issue of new cartridges would cause them that much problem in India.

The reasons for the confidence of the British rulers about their position in India before May 1857 were:

- 1) There were several riots, rebellion, and revolts which occurred before May 1857 but all these were suppressed by the British then and there.
- 2) The Indian nawabs had gradually lost their power, authority and honour.
- 3) The British Governor Generals posted their residents in several courts, the freedom of the rulers reduced, their armed forces disbanded and their revenue and territories taken away stage by stage.
- 4) The Company was confident of its military powers.
- 5) In 1856, Governor General Canning decided that Bahadur Shah Zafar would be the last Mughal king and after his death none of his descendant would be recognized as king. They would just be called prince.

Question 6:

What impact did Bahadur Shah Zafar's support to the rebellion have in the people and the ruling families?

Answer:

Though the rebels were determined to bring the East India Company's rule in the country to an end, they were faced with the question as who would rule the land once British were thrown out of the country. The answer to this question lay in the Red Fort, in Delhi. When the rebel forces reached Delhi Red Fort Bahadur Shah was reluctant to take on the might of British. However, he had to give in and was proclaimed the leader of the rebels.

Bahadur Shah Zafar's decision to bless the rebellion changed the entire situation and it had the following impacts:

- 1) People felt inspired and enthused. It gave them courage, hope and confidence to act.
- 2) The emperor wrote the letters to the small rulers and chieftain of the country to come forward against the British rule in India.
- 3) Regiment after regiment mutinied and took off to join other troops at nodal points like Delhi, Kanpur, and Lucknow.
- 4) Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the late Peshwa Baji Rao gathered armed forces and expelled the British garrison from the city. He declared himself that he was a governor under Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.
- 5) Birjis Qadr, the son of the deposed Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was made the new Nawab in Lucknow. He too acknowledged the suzerainty of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Question 7:

How did the British succeed in securing the submission of the rebel landowners of Awadh?

Answer:

During 1857 widespread rebellion took place in Awadh. The villages took to arms and the landlords led them. To securing the submission of the rebel landowners of Awadh they tried these methods:

- 1) The British tried their best to win back the loyalty of common masses.
- 2) They announced rewards for loyal landholders would be allowed to enjoy their traditional rights over their landholdings.
- 3) Those who rebelled were told that if they submitted to British and haven't killed any white people they would remain safe and their rights over their land would be safe.
- 4) On the one hand, they tried and hanged the rebels leaders who challenged their authority and could do so again in the future. On the other hand, The British also tried their best to win back the loyalties of the people. They announced rewards for those who would remain faithful to them.
- 5) They crushed the revolt with a heavy hand.
- 6) The British military generals also tried to recapture those places which once felt to the rules.

Question 8:

In what ways did the British change their policies as a result of the rebellion of 1857?

Answer:

The British had regained control of the country by the end of 1859, but they could not carry on ruling the land with the same policies anymore. Following were the changes introduced by the British as a result of the rebellion of 1857:

1) **British Crown took over the control of administration:** The British Parliament passed a new act in 1858 and transferred the powers of the East India Company to the British Crown in order to ensure a more responsible management of Indian affairs.

2) **Secretary was appointed for governance:** A member of the British Cabinet was appointed Secretary of State for India and made responsible for all matters related to the governance in India.

3) **Provide a sense of security to the local rulers:** All ruling chiefs of the country were assured that their territory would never be annexed in future. They were allowed to pass on their kingdoms to their heirs, including adopted sons. However, they were made to acknowledge the British Queen as their sovereign paramount.

4) **Reorganized the army:** It was decided that the proportion of Indian soldiers in the army would be reduced and the number of European soldiers would be increased. It was also decided that instead of recruiting soldiers from Awadh, Bihar, Central India,

and South India, more soldiers would be recruited from among the Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Pathans.

5) Provide a sense of security to the landlords: Policies were made to protect landlords and zamindars and give them security of rights over their lands.

6) Promised non-interference in the sphere of religion: The British assured the Indian that their religious and social practice would be respected and not interfere with.

❖ LET'S DO

Find out stories and songs remembered by people in your area or your family about San Sattavan ki Ladaai. What memories do people cherish about the great uprising?

Answer:

Do it yourself.

Question 10:

Find out more about Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi. In what ways would she have been an unusual woman for her times?

Answer:

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi: She was an unusual woman for her time because she fought against the British rule during the rebellion movements in 1857. She led the movement at central India. She was patriotic woman. Her bravery, sacrifice and empowerment of women in the 19th century made her the icon of Indian independence.

The Raja of Jhansi had been originally a vassal of the Peshwa. After the defeat of Baji Rao II, Lord Hastings in 1818 had concluded a treaty with the Raja on terms of 'subordinate co-operation'. Company recognized a granduncle, Raghunath Rao to succeed to the throne. After his death, his successor Gangadhar Rao was recognized as the ruler in 1838. But he died in November 1853 without leaving a male heir and the state was declared annexed by Lord Dalhousie. The claims of the adopted son were disregarded. So the Queen of Jhansi Rani Lakshmibai joined to revolt to protest against the annexation of Jhansi by the English.

When the Rani joined the revolt, General Sir Hume Rose attacked Jhansi in March 1858, but the brave Rani Lakshmibai kept the British General unnerved for quite some time. When she found that she could not hold the English for a long time she appealed to Tantia Tope for help which brought Tantia Tope rushing to Jhansi. But by the time he reached Jhansi her troops were severely defeated by the British on the banks of the river Betwa. Now the Rani had to hold on to her fortress above. The British also knew it would be difficult for them to enter into the fortress. So the British resorted to deceit and treachery and bribed the guards to open the gates of the fortress. Even then the British were unable to capture the Rani who slipped out of the fort and reached Kalpi. Here she was joined by Tantia Tope the great general of Nana Sahib, who fled to Kalpi. Now the Rani of Jhansi and the great General Tantia Tope joined together and fought many wars with the British. While fighting they had to leave Kalpi.

The ruler of Gwalior Jayaji Rao Sindhia was a dependent ruler of the British Company who was paying lots of tribute and he was also very loyal to the Company. Now the Company had the responsibility to protect their independent *i.e.* the ruler of Gwalior. A fierce battle was fought between the British and the revolutionaries under Rani Lakshmibai and Tantia Tope from June 11-18, 1858 A.D. Even though the Rani and Tantia Top were able Generals, their personal valour was not at all a good match the resources at the command of the British. Gwalior was recaptured by the British in June 18, 1858. The Rani of Jhansi died fighting clad in soldier's uniform on the ramparts of the fort. Tantia Tope escaped southward. In April 1859 he was captured by one of the Sindhia's feudatory, who handed him over to the British to be hanged on April 18, 1859.

Sir Hume Rose paid a tribute to the valour of Rani Lakshmibai by saying, "Lakshmibai was the bravest and the best of military leaders of the rebels".