



The Insurrection of Tribal Revolt in 1857: A Brief Sketch

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Abstract:

The revolt of 1857 has many ups and downs but the tribal revolt in Bihar & Jharkhand has its own importance. It is very remarkable to note how the unnecessary interference of the company rule inflamed the Tribals to start a revolt to save their culture, tradition and natural way of life. In this present Article a great attempt has been done to find out the efforts made by the tribals in revolt of 1857.

Context:

As we know that a tide of action can be checked but a tide of curiosity cannot be checked, Such a situation lies with the tribal revolt in 1857 against the mischievous behaviour of the British. To know this, we will try to know in brief the historical, social, political, economic and cultural activities of the tribals and their religious beliefs. Although, they were not up to the mark but the passion to get rid off their motherland free from the mighty clutches of the British rule seems a matter of great upheaval. Tremendous efforts have been made to bring out the hidden acts made by the tribals. Almost all the reactions which paved the path of a massive revolt in 1857 which are well discussed here.

So far as the historical aspect of this topic is concerned, Birbhum district was the centre of administration before 1857 and the same condition was during the Mughal period too. As the Mughal dynasty began to decline the British made these areas under control and started to collect the Diwani of Bihar and Bengal. Thus, they started to exploit the tribals mercilessly. As the British got the tribal region under control, they made an unnecessary interference in their day to day life. They not only applied a new administrative policy which destroyed the whole set up of the tribal community. But the British also compelled the tribals to bear these suppressive rules and regulations which proved quite destructive and humiliating for them.

Before the arrival of the East India Company these tribals had been following the rules of their Pahan only and had been living in perfect peace and harmony. But under the British new rule a new type of relation developed between landlords and ryots. Soon a large number of tribal people came from the outside and the British started to harass them by seizing their own paternal land. By new agriculture rule, the farmers and peasants lost their possessions on their own land slowly and gradually. The rate of land revenue (lagaan) was increased very high. If anybody failed to pay the

lagan or became late their land was seized .The British destroyed the Indian Industries to prepare a market to sell their own goods .They not only extended their trade in India but also tried their best to compel the tribals to follow the Christian language ,culture and religion to carry on their business on a large scale.

The reaction against the economic ,social and religious harassment came on the epoch of Indian History as a tribal revolt in 1857. The Cole Revolt of 1831-1832 under the leadership of Gomadhur Kunwar was also very remarkable .The British made a control on these tribal areas of Chotanagpur region by applying Bengal regulation Act of 1793 .Only the region of Daminekoh was left untouched .The British announced that there would be no increase in lagan and no new system would be introduced there. There was made an arrangements of Patwari for each and every village. Only the forest region Ramgarh remained safe. But by the forest Act of 1835 the survey of forest land started and in 1919 the whole land's right went into the hands of the British Govt. Consequently they lost their natural use of forest goods. In course of time , the English tried to take these areas under control by making several Acts. Where the Adiwasis lived with their family as an organisation with peace and harmony. Family under Village and Village under Pahan made a series of administration. Pahan was called Mukhiya or Pradhan. When these regions came under the control of the British there was no systematic rule there. Kingship was applicable in Ramgarh and Chotanagpur but these kings had no control on these tribal regions. These tribals enjoyed their life freely and happily but the English considered the tribals illiterate, barbarian and uncultured. The new administrative land reform policy was also very oppressive. The land reform policy of lord Cornwallis in Chotanagpur and Palamu took a serious reaction in the form of Cole revolt which broke out in the whole tribal regions quickly. Although, the revolt which was suppressed but certain administrative measures had been taken to take action against the land lords. It had been decided not to take the properties of Mankis and Munda. The criteria, of Nile cultivation was minimized. Slavery was banned and in place of this new police and judicial system was enforced.

The Poto revolt was another awakening which created an atmosphere of anger and reaction against the company rule.'The divide and rule' policy was applied by the British which was its immediate cause. The Britishers decided to give the beneficial rank to 'HO, tribe so that they might rule easily but the people of Kolhan region reacted against the oppressive rule without coming in any undue influence. Although, the Poto revolt was brutally crushed, the feeling of revenge put fuel in fire and in 1857, once again they opposed the company rule .As a result, the company rule shifted in the hands of British crown in 1858. Now , they changed their policy 'Doctrine of Lapse' and made an indirect plan to rule India.

But,the flame of tribal revolt became furious in Chotanagpur missionary . The awakening of the Hindu religion and crusades also influenced the tribals to go for a change under the leadership of Birsa Munda and Tana Bhagat . Birsa movement was totally based on crusade , social awakening, avoid of animal sacrifices , idol worship , avoid of non-veg items ,drinking wine etc. Birsa appeared on the screen of Munda society like a 'masiha'. The British grew nervous to see his growing popularity and imprisoned him. Later on, he was released from jail and Birsa decided to lead the movement with great zeal and determination because he believed that the oppressive rule of the British alone is only responsible for their catastrophe . Although, this revolt was also crushed brutally but it paved a new way get their hereditary right on khutkhuti land but, the sale and purchase right of land was completely banned.

Santhal revolt under Sidhu and Kanhu has its own importance. In 1895, Sidhu Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav (son of Chunnu Majhi) organized the santhal tribes and

revolted against the company rule knowing that only the company rule are responsible for their poverty and miseries . The revolt was so explosive that the English had to take certain steps to crush it by implementing military rule. In Bhagalpur district Tilka Majhi led the tribal revolt which could not last long, he was caught and sentenced to death. After the Santhal revolt, a new district as Santhal pargana came in force for better administration. There was a ban on entry of the outsider but the activities of the Christian missionaries were to propagate their religion.

Lastly, Tana Bhagat movement is known as the start of renaissance and religion reforms in Oraon tribes to remove the ill feelings but Tana Bhagat movement was totally different which was started to awake these tribals but slowly and gradually this revolt took a furious shape in 1919.

Thus, the tribals started the revolt to get themselves free from the mighty clutches of the Britishers and save their land , custom , tradition, culture and civilization without any hindrance and encouraged themselves to go on a huge fight .Out and out, the conclusion of this topic is quite clear. After a brief discussion of different facts and circumstances, it seems that the tribals did not like to tolerate the unnecessary interference in their social, cultural, economic and religious life. When they were badly suppressed by the Britishers then they decided to go against the company rule which resulted in the revolt of 1857. This revolt has a great impact on Indian History because without any perfect leadership , they plucked up their courage to fight against the British misrule and presented a great sense of National unity. It is also proved from the above discussions that passion is important for any change and they have the spirit, courage and enthusiasm to save their Motherland and kick out the foreigners by hook or crook.

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