

CC-12: HISTORY OF INDIA (1750s-1857)

VI. POPULAR RESISTANCE:

(A) SANTHAL UPRISING (1857)

When the elites of the India society were busy in initiating social and religious reforms to change their society from within to answer the moralistic critiques of the West, the rural society was responding to the imposition of the colonial rule in an entirely different way. In contrast to the urban intelligentsia, who were also the chief beneficiaries of the colonial rule, the response of the traditional elite and the peasantry, who were losing out as a result of colonial imposition, was that of resistance and defiance, resulting in a series of unsuccessful attempts at restoring the old order.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the revenue reforms of the Company's government had fundamentally affected and altered the India rural society.

Tribal and Peasant Movements were isolated outburst against local grievances though more or less similar in characteristic, which were primarily economic in nature. The primary target was local vested interest; British officers came into conflict due to question of law and order which were involved there.

Among the numerous tribal revolts, the Santhal uprising was the most massive one. With the introduction of permanent settlement in Bengal in 1793, the Santhals were employed as labourers with the promise of wages or rent-free lands. However, they were forced to become agricultural surfs, exploited at will.

The Santhal rebellion occurred in the Rajmahal hills of the Santhal region in Jharkhand. This uprising was led by four brothers Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav. The Santhal, who lived in the area between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal, known as Daman-i-koh, rose in revolt; made a determined attempt to expel the

outsiders -the money lenders, police and landlords and the Colonial officers. The outset, Santhal rebels made tremendous gains and captured a large tract of land extending from Rajmahal hills to Birbhum district in 1855.

However, the rebellion was suppressed and about fifteen to twenty thousand Santhals were killed. After the revolt was suppressed. The Colonial state stepped in quickly and efficiently to redress the grievances of the Santhals, with the result that a more cordial relationship ensued. The Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act was passed and the territories that they inhabited were grouped under a new territorial unit, Santhal Parganas and it was henceforth stipulated that the usual bureaucratic and judicial procedures of British India would not apply there.

Further there were special provisions for land rights and it became illegal for a Santhal to transfer land to non-Santhals.

The Santhal rebellion of 1857 was marked by some of the worst features of elemental tribal passion and open denunciation of the British rule.

REFERENCE

Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar. *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2004

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IV. RURAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

(E) . PASTORAL ECONOMY AND SHIFTING CULTIVATION.

Pastoralism is an economic activity which involves caring of herds of domesticated livestock either as a primary or main mode of subsistence or it is combined with agricultural activities. Before the nineteenth century India was connected with Afghanistan by a migratory route through which central Asian tribes came down to India to trade as well to work and also in search of pasture. Colonial Government in India at one stage attempted to encourage and sustain the trade which flowed through this route. They set up trading posts, opened passes and ensured safety.

Shifting cultivation is the most complex and multifaceted form of agriculture in the world. Its highly diverse land use system has been evolving since as early as 10,000 BCE in a wide range of distinct socioeconomic and ecological conditions, from montane to lowland ecosystems and from tropical forests to grasslands. Shifting cultivation encompasses cropping system such as horticulture and annual cropping, perennial tree crops, animal husbandry and management of forest and fallows in sequential or rotational cycles. Shifting cultivation has been a subject of debate since the colonial era. The term shifting cultivation refers to any temporal or spatially cyclical of agricultural system that involves clearing of land-usually with the assistance of fire-followed by phases of cultivation and fallow period. In the hilly region of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, shifting cultivation, locally known as jhum, continues to be a dominant mode of food production and the economic mainstay of many rural households. During the colonial period, officers of the agricultural and forest departments, missionaries

and scientists often viewed shifting cultivators as primitive, which often provided a moral justification for their subjugation. In early colonial enterprise, the colonialists sold products from shifting cultivation system to traders who circulated extractive tropical products, sugar and slave. They intervened in local practices when they thought these products directly competed with the primary extractive resources and siphoned labour away from the more commercial sector of the economy. Since the colonial period, many regulations have aimed to stop, prohibit and transform shifting cultivation. They have also tried to replace community tenure systems and practice of shifting cultivation with state control extraction and commercial tree plantation. Colonial laws were passed to formalize such interventions.
