

INDIAN HISTORY 1707-1950

**IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR EXAM
MUST WATCH TO SCORE GOOD MARKS**

What were the main causes of the revolt of 1857? Discuss.

The **Revolt of 1857**, also known as the **First War of Indian Independence** or the **Sepoy Mutiny**, was a major uprising against British rule in India. Several factors contributed to this revolt:

- **Social and Religious Causes:**
 - The British interference in the traditional social and religious practices of Indians caused widespread discontent.
 - The **introduction of new rifle cartridges**: The rumor spread that the new Enfield rifle cartridges were greased with animal fat, particularly from cows and pigs, which offended both Hindus (who revered cows) and Muslims (who considered pigs unclean). This issue directly affected the Indian sepoy (soldiers).
 - **Religious reforms**: British regulations, such as the banning of Sati (widow burning) and the promotion of widow remarriage, angered orthodox Hindus.
- **Economic Causes:**
 - **Exploitation of Indian economy**: The British policies, such as the imposition of heavy taxes on farmers and the deindustrialization of India, led to widespread poverty and unrest.
 - **Permanent Settlement**: Introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, it imposed fixed revenue collection, burdening the peasants and leading to widespread distress.
- **Military Causes:**
 - The sepoy in the British East India Company's army faced poor pay, harsh discipline, and lack of respect from their British officers. The introduction of the new rifle cartridges was the immediate trigger for the revolt.
 - Additionally, the British attitude towards Indian soldiers was degrading and discriminatory.
- **Political Causes:**
 - The annexation of Indian kingdoms by the British under the Doctrine of Lapse and other policies like the annexation of Awadh (Oudh) angered many local rulers and nobility, causing political resentment.

Outcomes of the 1857 Revolt:

- Though the revolt was suppressed by the British, it marked the beginning of the struggle for Indian independence.
- After the revolt, the British government dissolved the British East India Company and took direct control of India, marking the beginning of the **British Raj** (Crown Rule) in 1858.

Discuss the permanent settlement in Bengal. What effects did it have?

The **Permanent Settlement** was introduced in Bengal by Lord Cornwallis in 1793. Its main objective was to ensure a fixed revenue from land, which would help the British administration maintain financial stability.

Features of the Permanent Settlement:

- The British gave land ownership rights to **zamindars** (landlords), who were made responsible for collecting and paying taxes to the British government.
- Zamindars were to pay a fixed amount of land revenue, regardless of agricultural productivity.

Consequences of the Permanent Settlement:

- **Benefit to Zamindars:** While the zamindars benefited from the new system, they often extracted high rents from the peasants to meet their revenue obligations.
- **Exploitation of Peasants:** The peasants, who had no ownership rights over land, suffered under this system as they were forced to pay heavy rents to the zamindars. Many farmers were driven into debt.
- **Decline of Agriculture:** The system discouraged improvements in agriculture because the zamindars focused solely on collecting the fixed revenue, without any interest in increasing agricultural productivity.
- **Socio-economic Inequality:** This led to the creation of a new class of powerful landowners (zamindars), while the majority of the population, the peasants, became increasingly impoverished.

Describe the effects of commercialisation of agriculture under the British.

Under British rule, agriculture in India was increasingly commercialized. The primary aim was to make India a supplier of raw materials for British industries and to generate revenue for the British government.

Key Features of Agricultural Commercialization:

- The British encouraged the cultivation of crops like **cotton, opium, indigo, and jute**, which were required for the British industries and trade.

- **Export-oriented Agriculture:** Instead of focusing on food crops like rice and wheat, farmers were forced to grow cash crops for export to Britain and other countries.

Consequences of Agricultural Commercialization:

- **Food Scarcity and Famines:** With an emphasis on cash crops, food crops were neglected. This contributed to several famines in India, such as the **Bengal Famine of 1770** and others in subsequent decades. As cash crops were prioritized, India faced food shortages, leading to widespread hunger and starvation.
- **Economic Exploitation of Farmers:** The commercialization of agriculture meant that farmers had to bear the brunt of heavy taxes and fluctuating market prices. Many farmers fell into debt and lost their land.
- **Decline of Traditional Agriculture:** The focus on cash crops led to the decline of traditional farming practices that had been more sustainable and suited to local needs.

Discuss the main ideas of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) was a pioneering social reformer and one of the most influential figures in the Indian Renaissance. His contributions focused on social reforms, religious rationalism, and the promotion of education. Some of his key ideas were:

- **Abolition of Sati:**
Raja Ram Mohan Roy is best known for his strong opposition to the **Sati system** (the practice of widow burning). He campaigned vigorously against this inhuman practice, which he saw as both socially and morally wrong. His efforts culminated in the **Abolition of Sati Act** in 1829, passed by the British government.
- **Social and Religious Reforms:**
Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in the need to reform Hindu society. He advocated for rationalism and opposed practices like **idol worship, superstition, and caste-based discrimination**. He believed in **monotheism** and emphasized the importance of spiritual awakening through reason.
- **Promotion of Education:**
Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that **education** was the key to progress. He advocated for modern scientific and rational education and the spread of **Western-style education** in India. He also supported the education of women and promoted the learning of English for Indians.
- **Founding of the Brahma Samaj:**
In 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the **Brahmo Samaj**, an organization aimed at promoting social and religious reforms. It sought to remove the **idolatry, superstitions, and orthodox rituals** from Hinduism and promote **spirituality and humanism**. The Brahma Samaj became a powerful force for social change.
- **Advocacy for Women's Rights:**
Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the first reformers to advocate for **women's rights**. He believed in improving the status of women, especially by promoting their education and granting them legal rights.

- **Religious Tolerance and Rationalism:**

He promoted **religious tolerance** and **interfaith dialogue**, advocating that all religions should be viewed through the lens of reason and logic. He rejected religious orthodoxy and blind rituals.

Legacy: Raja Ram Mohan Roy is often referred to as the "Father of the Indian Renaissance" because of his contributions to the social, educational, and cultural reforms of India. His ideas laid the foundation for the modern, progressive Indian society.

Scholarly Minds