

The tribal (tribal) movement in the 19th century

In the 19th century, many tribal movements took place against foreign rule and its evils. Various types of challenges arose in the tribal or tribal areas against the British power. Many of them emerged after the establishment of British rule and during the expansion of British power. After 1765, the British began their expansion into the hilly areas of Bihar, Assam and Khasi region. As a result, there was a feeling of resistance among the tribals. At the same time, the local population was also affected due to the arrival and settling of non-tribals. New changes in land confiscation, lost independence, the introduction of administrative innovations, foreign intrusion into local autonomy, economic exploitation by the Mahajans, social life, etc. gave rise to suspicion among the tribals and it intruded in their culture and economic condition. Ethnic relations were a basic and important feature of tribal protest because they saw themselves as having a tribal identity. The 19th-century tribal opposition can be described as:

Time before 1857:

Before 1857, there were more than 20 major and minor tribal revolts in India. Most of such revolts were of local nature and the result of immediate factors. For example- Ho, Munda, Koi movements took place in Chhotanagpur area, due to suspected incursions in their region, Bhil revolts were concentrated in the hills of Khandesh, Santhal in Rajmahal hills, Ahom rebellion in Assam, Khasi rebellion in Khasi hills, New land The Mappila rebellion occurred on the Malabar coast due to problems caused by administrative policy.

- During this period, the tribes lacked a proper understanding of British rule in India. Their immediate goals were therefore local zamindars, money lenders and local officials.
- These tribal movements were different in nature. There was neither the proper organization nor proper planning was behind them.
- Most of the Adivasis were non-progressive and backward in nature. They tried to establish old ways whether it was in the form of local tribal customs or the zamindari system.

Time after 1857:

- Most of the character of the tribal movement remained the same but their outlook began to change. Adivasis came to understand the nexus between the British, landlords, moneylenders (money lenders) and outsiders (dikus). For example "Birsa Munda used to say-" Sahab- Sahab ek Topi "(Britishers- Zamindars are the same).

- Tribal protest withdrew its inspiration from its charismatic leaders, who often claimed supernatural powers, for example- Sidhu and Kanho, leaders of the Santhal Rebellion, told their supporters that no weapon could kill them. Similarly, Birsa told his followers that Singh Bonga (tribal God) had come in his dream and asked them to fight with outsiders. Similarly, the concepts of Satyuga and Dharmyuga were depicted as the superstitious nature of tribal movements.
- Tribal protest demarcated a unique cultural identity that was distinctive in nature. A tribe has its own rules, customs and traditions, which clash with outsiders as well as foreigners. Tribal identity was the most important part of a tribal protest in India.
- Most tribal movements were directed against outsiders and other tribals were not attacked until they were suspected of helping outsiders. The accounts of the money-lenders (moneylenders) and the zamindars were the main targets of the tribals. The tribals tried to burn these accounts to avoid lending and interest.

However, these tribal movements eventually failed due to the nature of tribal revolts as they were backwards, scattered and failed to take the form of a strong movement. The leaders of these movements had no future plans for governance and the development of their tribe. The weakness inherent within tribal societies such as superstition and intoxication also led to the failure of the movement. The English army, equipped with modern weapons and disciplined soldiers, easily defeated the herds of primitive and untrained tribals, who were fighting with swords, bows and arrows, hand axes. For example - in the Santhal Rebellion thousands of Santhals gathered at the sound of drums and were shot by the British without much effort. Most important was the lack of support from the Indian public as well as national leaders and the general public, and eventually, these movements were isolated. But the struggle of the tribals did not go in vain. Independent India duly recognized tribal rights and aspirations.