

Q.1) Analyse the impact of colonial policies on tribal communities in India. How did tribal resistance evolve in response to these disruptions? (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

The colonial encounter deeply disrupted tribal ecosystems, dismantling their autonomy, land rights, and socio-cultural institutions. As *David Hardiman* observes, "Colonial rule transformed the tribals from autonomous communities into subordinated populations."

Body

Impact of Colonial Policies on Tribal Communities

- **Land Alienation:** The introduction of the **Zamindari system** displaced tribals from community-owned lands, as seen in **Santhal areas**, where many lost land to moneylenders and landlords.
- **Forest Restrictions:** **Forest Acts** curtailed traditional rights like hunting and shifting cultivation. The **Gonds**, for instance, were denied access to forest-based livelihood practices.
- **Labour Exploitation:** Tribals like the **Oraons** were pushed into **plantation labour** under semi-bonded conditions, especially in **tea estates** of Assam and Bengal.
- **Cultural Disruption:** **Missionary activities** led to **mass conversions**, changing religious identities and weakening tribal belief systems, particularly among the **Oraons**.
- **Displacement:** Expansion of **railways, mines, and plantations** led to forced displacement, as seen in **Chotanagpur**, where tribal settlements were uprooted.
- **Criminalisation:** The **Criminal Tribes Act (1871)** stigmatised communities like the **Pardhis and Kanjars**, placing them under surveillance and limiting their mobility.

Evolution of Tribal Resistance

- **Spontaneous Uprisings:** Early revolts like the **Khond rebellion (1846)** were direct reactions to revenue demands and cultural interference.
- **Militant Movements:** The **Santhal Hul (1855–56)** became a major armed uprising targeting colonial officials and landlords.
- **Spiritual Leadership:** **Birsa Munda** led the **Ulgulan** movement combining religious revival with anti-colonial mobilisation and demands for land rights.

- **Guerrilla Tactics:** Alluri Sitarama Raju's revolt (1922–24) used guerrilla warfare in forested regions of Andhra to challenge British authority.
- **Nationalist Alignment:** Tribal anger merged with **freedom movement goals**, seen in the **Telangana armed struggle (1946–51)** involving tribal peasants.
- **Political Assertion:** The **Tana Bhagat movement** reflected a shift toward **non-violent, Gandhian resistance**, demanding rights and dignity within a constitutional framework.

Conclusion

Tribal resistance was not peripheral—it was a vital strand of India's anti-colonial fabric. As *Ramachandra Guha* notes, "the history of tribal revolts is also the history of India's conscience." These revolts embodied resilience, dignity, and defiance.

Q.2) Discuss the major themes and regional variations in socio-religious reform movements during the 19th century. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

In the 19th century, socio-religious reformers challenged outdated customs and encouraged modern thinking. As *Romila Thapar* notes, they aimed to blend tradition with modernity to uplift and renew Indian society.

Body

Major Themes of Socio-Religious Reform Movements

1. **Critique of Caste and Untouchability:** Reformers condemned caste-based discrimination and worked to uplift marginalized communities.

Example: Jyotirao Phule campaigned against Brahminical dominance and untouchability.

2. **Promotion of Women's Rights:** Movements advocated widow remarriage, female education, and abolition of sati.

Example: Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed widow remarriage and girls' education.

3. Rationalism and Scriptural Reinterpretation: Many reformers encouraged reinterpretation of scriptures to align with ethical and rational principles.

Example: Raja Ram Mohan Roy challenged idol worship and promoted monotheism.

4. Abolition of Social Evils: Practices like child marriage, dowry, and polygamy were targeted for reform.

Example: Dayanand Saraswati opposed idolatry and promoted Vedic teachings to reform society.

5. Religious Revivalism: Some movements sought to revive and purify Hinduism from within by returning to ancient scriptures.

Example: Arya Samaj aimed to revive Vedic values and reject caste rigidity.

6. Inter-Religious Harmony: Efforts were made to bridge communal divides and promote ethical values common to all faiths.

Example: Brahmo Samaj encouraged universalism and rejected caste and ritualism.

Regional Variations in Social reform Movements

1. Bengal: The birthplace of reform movements like Brahmo Samaj and the Young Bengal movement, emphasizing rationalism and social reform.

Example: Raja Ram Mohan Roy led Bengal's reformist activities.

2. Maharashtra: Home to Phule's anti-caste activism and the Prarthana Samaj's focus on social upliftment.

Example: Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule pioneered education for lower castes and women.

3. Punjab: Arya Samaj's activities focused on Vedic revivalism and promoting education.

Example: Dayanand Saraswati's teachings spread widely in Punjab.

4. South India: Movements like the Justice Party addressed caste inequalities and promoted Dravidian identity.

Example: Periyar's later Self-Respect Movement emerged from these roots.

5. North India: Ramakrishna Mission and movements inspired by Swami Vivekananda combined spirituality with social reform.

Example: Vivekananda emphasized self-realization and social service.

Conclusion

The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century were diverse in theme and regional expression but united in their pursuit of social justice and rational spirituality.

D.D. Kosambi said, "These reform movements were the seeds of India's modern social consciousness."

Q.3) Discuss the role of Jyotirao Phule in challenging caste-based hierarchies in 19th-century India. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Jyotirao Phule emerged as a pioneering social reformer who radically challenged the caste system and Brahminical dominance in 19th-century India. *As Phule famously asserted, "The real knowledge comes from breaking the chains of caste."*

Body

Role of Jyotirao Phule in Challenging Caste Hierarchies

- **Ideological Critique** : Phule exposed how **Brahmins used religious texts and rituals to maintain caste-based oppression**, arguing that social inequality was legitimised through distorted interpretations of Hindu scriptures.
- **Rejection of Scriptural Justifications**: In his work *Gulamgiri*, Phule systematically **attacked the scriptural basis of caste and untouchability**, equating the treatment of lower castes in India to slavery.
- **Educational Empowerment** Recognising education as key to emancipation, Phule and **Savitribai Phule** started the **first schools for girls and Dalits**, directly defying upper-caste norms and enabling lower castes to gain access to knowledge and self-worth.
- **Founding of Satyashodhak Samaj**: In 1873, Phule institutionalised his anti-caste ideology by founding this society to promote **truth-seeking, equality, and rationalism**, while rejecting **Brahminical dominance in rituals and priesthood**.
- **Practical Efforts Toward Social Equality**: Phule **encouraged inter-caste dining and marriages**, organised community events for lower castes, and campaigned against **untouchability**, offering a direct challenge to caste segregation in daily life.

- **Stand Against Patriarchy:** Phule extended his critique to include **gender-based oppression**, arguing that caste and patriarchy reinforced each other. He condemned practices like **child marriage** and advocated for **widow remarriage and women's education**.
- **Bahujan Identity :** Phule articulated a vision for a unified identity of oppressed groups—**Shudras, Ati-Shudras, women, and minorities**—under the term **Bahujan**, encouraging collective resistance against caste injustice.

Conclusion

Jyotirao Phule's relentless efforts laid the foundation for anti-caste activism and social reform in India. As *Gail Omvedt notes*, "Phule was a pioneer in articulating the cause of the oppressed and envisioning an egalitarian society."

Q.4) To what extent was the Revolt of 1857 a national uprising? Evaluate in light of its causes, participation, and outcomes. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

The Revolt of 1857 was a major rebellion against British rule in India. It was driven by various political, economic, and social reasons and marked the first large-scale resistance to colonial authority. As *V.D. Savarkar stated*, "The revolt was a national war of independence, not just a sepoy mutiny."

Body

Causes of the Revolt

1. **Military Grievances:** Discontent among sepoys over pay, promotion, and use of greased cartridges offended religious sentiments.
Example: The Enfield rifle cartridge controversy sparked immediate unrest.
2. **Economic Exploitation:** Heavy taxation, land alienation, and disruption of traditional economies caused widespread distress.
Example: The zamindari system and British revenue policies impoverished peasants.

- 3. Political Annexations:** Doctrine of lapse and annexation of princely states like Awadh bred resentment.

Example: Deposition of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah fueled regional anger.

- 4. Social and Religious Factors:** Missionary activities and cultural interference threatened traditional beliefs.

Example: Fear of forced conversions alarmed many communities.

Participation and Spread

- 1. Military Participation:** Primarily led by Indian sepoys in the Bengal Army but included some cavalry and infantry units.

Example: Revolts broke out simultaneously in Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow.

- 2. Princely States and Peasants:** Some rulers and peasants joined the revolt while others remained loyal to the British.

Example: Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi and Tantia Tope became iconic leaders.

- 3. Regional Variation:** The revolt had strongholds in North and Central India but was limited in South and East India.

Example: Punjab and Madras presidencies saw little rebellion.

Outcomes and Legacy

- 1. Failure to Achieve Immediate Independence:** The revolt was suppressed within a year.

Example: British reasserted control after heavy military campaigns.

- 2. End of East India Company Rule:** The British Crown took direct control of India in 1858.

Example: The Government of India Act (1858) established the British Raj.

- 3. Military and Administrative Reforms:** Reorganisation of the army and greater inclusion of loyal communities.

Example: Increased recruitment from Sikhs and Gurkhas.

- 4. Political Awakening:** The revolt sowed seeds of nationalism and inspired future freedom struggles.

Example: Later nationalist leaders drew inspiration from 1857.

Evaluation

1. Although the revolt lacked a unified leadership and nationwide participation, it expressed a common resentment against British rule across diverse sections of Indian society.
2. Its symbolic value as a collective defiance marked the beginning of India's nationalist consciousness, making it a precursor to later pan-Indian movements.

Conclusion

While the Revolt of 1857 was not uniformly national in participation, its causes, scale, and legacy qualify it as a significant national uprising. *As Bipin Chandra argues, "It was the first collective expression of Indian resistance against British rule."*

Q.5) Trace the transformation of the Indian National Congress from a moderate reformist body to a mass nationalist movement between 1885 and 1920. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

The Indian National Congress started in 1885 with 72 members, focusing on small changes under British rule. By 1920, leaders like Gandhi helped turn it into a large movement fighting for India's full independence.

Bipan Chandra notes, "The INC was the crucible in which modern Indian nationalism was forged."

Body

Early Phase (1885-1905): Moderate Phase

1. **Founding and Objectives:** Congress began as a forum for dialogue between Indian elites and British rulers.

Example: Leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale emphasized constitutional reforms.

2. **Methods:** Petitions, prayers, and protests within constitutional limits; loyalty to the British Crown.

Example: Demand for Indian representation in legislative councils.

- 3. Social Composition:** Predominantly upper-caste, English-educated middle class.

Example: Members were lawyers, teachers, and civil servants.

- 4. Key Issues:** Economic reforms, administrative changes, and civil rights.

Example: Critique of economic drain and poverty.

Early Radicalism and Swadeshi Movement (1905-1918)

- 1. Partition of Bengal (1905):** Sparked protests and the Swadeshi Movement emphasizing boycott of British goods.

Example: Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal became prominent leaders.

- 2. Emergence of Extremists:** Demand for Swaraj (self-rule) and more assertive tactics.

Example: Tilak's slogan "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it."

- 3. Division in Congress:** Moderates and extremists clashed over methods and goals.

Example: Surat Split (1907) divided the party.

- 4. Revival during Home Rule Movement:** Led by Annie Besant and Tilak, it mobilised middle-class Indians.

Example: Campaigns for self-government intensified.

Mass Nationalism and Gandhi's Leadership (1919-1920)

- 1. Impact of World War I:** Economic hardship and political repression fueled popular discontent.

Example: Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh massacre intensified anger.

- 2. Gandhi's Entry:** Emphasis on non-violent civil disobedience and mass mobilisation.

Example: Non-Cooperation Movement (1920) saw participation from peasants, workers, and women.

- 3. Transformation of Congress:** Shifted from elitist body to mass movement embracing all classes.

Example: Inclusion of peasants, students, and the working class.

- 4. New Ideology:** Emphasis on Swaraj, boycott of foreign goods, and social reform.

Example: Khadi and Swadeshi became symbols of nationalism.

Conclusion

Between 1885 and 1920, the INC transformed fundamentally from moderate reformism to mass nationalism during Gandhian phase, driven by socio-political realities and visionary leadership.

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