

Question:

'The Rajmahal Hills were drenched with the blood of the fighting Santhal peasantry.' in the lights of this statement discuss about the major reasons of Santhal Uprising. Also mention the reasons how these tribal uprisings happened and how these were suppressed.

Test paper : I

Topic: Modern Indian History, Pre Independence Tribal Revolts,

Model answer:**The Santhal Insurrection (1855-56)!**

- The Santhals are a group of tribals largely concentrated in Bihar. They are mainly agriculturists. The first peasant movement which took place in India dates back to Santhal insurrection of 1855-56. This in-surrection has reference to the establishment of the Permanent Land Settlement of 1793.
- The settlement pattern initiated by the British took away lands from the Santhals which they had cultivated for centuries. The zamindars took land on auction from the British government and gave it to the peasants who took it for cultivation.
- *The Santhals: Live in Daman-i-koh = area between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal*
- *Uprising = 'hool' in Santhal language*

This was one of the most massive revolt

1. A determined attempt to expel the outsiders — the dikus
2. Proclaimed the complete 'annihilation' of the alien regime.

Social conditions which drove them to insurrection

- Zamindars, police, revenue & courts exercised a combined system of extortions, oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of property, abuse & personal violence and a variety of petty tyrannies
- Usurious interest on loans (50 – 500 %)
- False measures at the haul and the market
- Wilful and uncharitable trespass by the rich by means of their untethered cattle, tattoos, ponies and even elephants, on the growing crops of the poorer race

How did the fire broke?

- By 1854, the tribal heads, the majhis and parganites, had begun to meet and discuss the possibility of revolting.
- Stray cases of the robbing of zamindars and moneylenders began to occur.
- 30 June, 1855- tribal leaders called an assembly of 6000 Santhals, representing 400 villages, at Bhaganidihi.
- They decided to raise the banner of revolt, get rid of the dikus once and for all, to usher in Satyug- 'The Reign of Truth,' and 'True Justice.'

Belief in the magic

They believed that their actions had the blessings of God. Sido and Kanhu, the principal rebel leaders, claimed that Thakur (God) had communicated with them and told them to take up arms and fight for independence.

Non tribal help

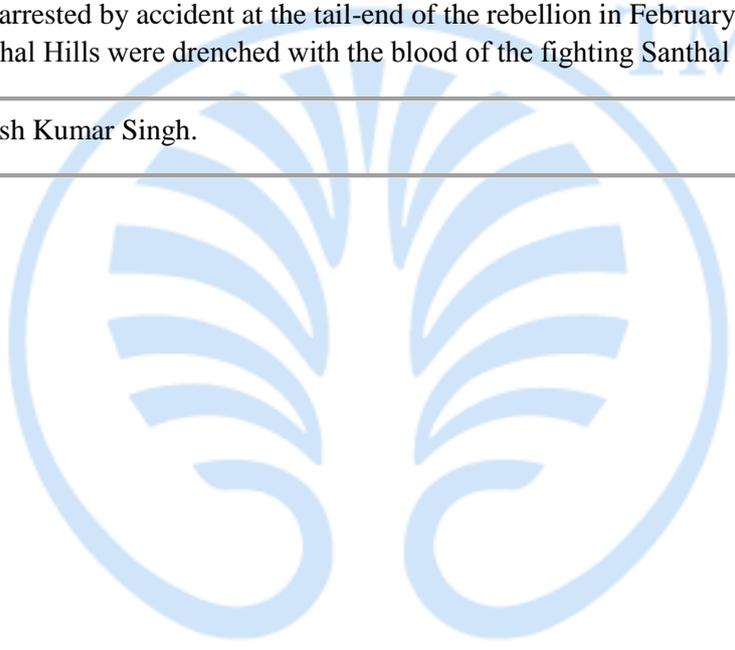
1. Insurrection was helped by a large number of non-tribal and poor dikus.

2. Gwalas (milkmen) and others helped the rebels with provisions and services;
3. Lohars (blacksmiths) accompanied the rebel bands, keeping their weapons in good shape.

Suppression:

- Government realized the scale of the rebellion & organized a major military campaign
- Mobilized many regiments, declared Martial Law, offered rewards of upto Rs. 10,000 for the capture of various leaders
- The rebellion was crushed ruthlessly
- More than 15,000 Santhals were killed while tens of villages were destroyed.
- Sido was betrayed and captured and killed in August 1855
- Kanhu was arrested by accident at the tail-end of the rebellion in February 1866
- ‘The Rajmahal Hills were drenched with the blood of the fighting Santhal peasantry.’

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