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Struggle for Freedom in India

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ India's trade relationships – entrance of foreign powers
- ▶ The British East India Company – their transformation from traders to rulers
- ▶ Exploitation of Indian farmers, traders and weavers.
- ▶ The policy of 'Divide and Rule'
- ▶ The Revolt of 1857
- ▶ India after 1857 – changes in the British rule – Indian reformers
- ▶ Rise of Nationalism in India – the Indian National Congress, 1885 – the leaders

Objectives

- ▶ Learning the background to the entrance of the British into India as traders and their transformation into rulers.
- ▶ The East India Company – its policies to exploit Indian farmers, traders and weavers.
- ▶ Learning about the causes for the Revolt of 1857
- ▶ Learning about the reasons for the failure of Revolt.
- ▶ Learning about reformers
- ▶ Rise of Nationalism in India – learnt about their exploitation in their own country – began forming associations – against British rule.
- ▶ The formation of the Indian National Congress
- ▶ Leaders – Spirit of unity awakened.

Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Use old maps to show how the British slowly entered India; and where the revolt of 1857 spread.
- ▶ There are miniature paintings showing the British envoys to the Mughal court, and paintings and photos of India during the British Raj.
- ▶ Pictures and postage stamps are available of all the heroic figures of the revolt of 1857, and most of the leaders of the freedom struggle, and of the events that occurred in various parts of India during the years of the British Raj.

- ▶ Amar Chitra Katha comics of various leaders of the revolt, the freedom movement and the reformers.

/// Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and bring alive the period of conquest, the exploitation, the resentment of Indians, such as the Indigo farmers, the selling of Indian goods abroad, the mills in Manchester receiving raw material cheap from India, and selling the mill cloth at high costs to Indians.
- ▶ Talk about the social evils – sati, child marriage, the condition of widows, the lack of education among women, etc. The lack of unity among Indian princes.
- ▶ The changes that western education brought – its advantages and disadvantages, exposure to world thinking, breaking up of the composite Indian culture – need for freedom, independence, new ways of government.

/// Gear Up and Background

- ▶ Tick the second picture. It shows Queen Victoria.
- ▶ Initially, the East India Company came to trade, got permission from the Mughal Emperor, and various king and princes – they built up forts and trading centres at Bombay, Calcutta, etc. [now Mumbai, Kolkata] – then began acquiring land/territories, entering into contracts, agreements, and alliances, fighting wars, etc.
- ▶ They began to systematically exploit the farmers, traders and weavers, buying raw material cheap and taking it to England where they were used for manufacture of cloth and sold the mill-made cloth to Indians at very high prices. Poverty increased.
- ▶ The Company began to interfere in the affairs of the Indian princes and kings, often taking huge amounts of money and wealth from the princes in return for protecting them from other princes. Indian princes were busy fighting among themselves, so they were easy victims for the Company, which followed the policy of 'Divide and Rule'.

/// The Revolt of 1857

- ▶ Discontentment and anger reached a peak in 1857 – Indian soldiers [sepoys] paid less than the British. Introduction of the Enfield rifle – Rumour that the cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. This angered both Hindu and Muslim sepoys, as the cartridges had to be held in the mouth before loading.
- ▶ Revolt began in Meerut in 1857 – Mangal Pandey, the first soldier, to refuse to use the cartridge – arrested and later hanged.
- ▶ Spread to various parts of North and Central India – with farmers, traders, workers, tribals and other workers often joining in.
- ▶ Kings and nawabs angry at attempt by the Company to take over their kingdoms – Bahadur Shah Zafar – the Mughal Emperor of India. The leaders – Nana Sahib and Tantia Tope in Kanpur, Begum Hazrat Mahal in Awadh [present Lucknow] and Rani Lakshmibai in Jhansi.
- ▶ First War of Independence – shook the Company's foundations. But the Company was often supported by Indian kings and nawabs and their armies – thousands of Indians killed and villages burnt down. Revolt suppressed.

- ▶ Causes of failure: a) Limited to a small part of country only, not spread all over India; b)Not supported by all parts of society, many sided with the Company; c) Indian soldiers not well-equipped.
- ▶ Results of 1857: a) Rule by the Company ended; b)administration taken over by British Crown; Queen Victoria; c) Indian kings and nawabs allowed to rule their kingdoms under British control; d) Viceroy appointed by Crown to rule India; e) British officers still cruel – Indians began to think of being free of them; f) Indians, under the influence of western education, began to question many Indian customs and reform them – sati, child marriage, widow remarriage, killing girl child, the caste system, etc.

/// Rise of Nationalism in India

- ▶ Modern education system based on Western ideas introduced in India.
- ▶ Indian reformers – Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Debendranath Tagore, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, etc. – opposed the social evils and encouraged widow remarriage and education of women.
- ▶ Indians began to resent being treated as slaves in their own country – associations formed – social groups, religious orders, political discussion groups, literary societies.
- ▶ Indian National Congress – formed by A. O. Hume, a retired British officer in 1885 – to have a meaningful relationship with the British.
- ▶ First session in Bombay [Mumbai] under presidentship of W. C. Bonnerjee.
- ▶ Annual sessions in different cities – people discussed problems and policies of the British – organisation became stronger.
- ▶ Leaders - W. C. Bonnerjee, Dadabhai Naoriji, S. N. Bannerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pheroze Shah Mehta, Badruddin Tayabji, M.G.Ranade, Madan Mohan Malaviya, etc.