

Introduction :

In 1757 the Muslims had not lost to the English only their kingdom, but also they lost their everything. The Muslims remained defiant in the face of all brutality by English in order to regain their freedom and prestige. The struggle for independence by the Muslims started after the tragedy of Plessey and continued until they could earn the freedom in 1947.

Contribution of the Muslims in the independence movement in Bengal between 1757 and 1947:

The Muslims started different independent movement after the tragedy of Plessey and continued till the achievement of that freedom. The following are those movements.

Battle of Boxer:

The battle of Boxer a town located on the bank of the Ganges River. The battle won by the forces of the British East India Company, and the combined armies of Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Awadh; and Shah Alam II, the Mughal Emperor. The battle fought at Boxer a town located on the bank of the Ganges River, was a decisive battle won by the forces of the British East India Company.

The Battle and booty:

British troops engaged in the fighting numbered 7,072 comprising 857 Europeans, 5,297 sepoy and 918 Indian cavalry. Estimates of the native force every from 40,000 to 60,000. Lack of co-ordination among the three disparate allies accounted for 2,000 dead; many more were wounded. The victors captured 133 pieces of artillery and over 1 million rupees of cash.

Treaty of Allahabad:

Suja-Ud-Daula, the prime victim, signed the Treaty of Allahabad that secured Diwani Rights for the Company to administer the collection and management of the revenues of almost 100,000,000 acres (400,000 km²) of real estate which

currently form parts of the Indian states of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, as well as Bangladesh. He was also forced to pay a war indemnity of 5 million rupees. However, all his pre-war possessions were returned except for the districts of Karra and Allahabad.

The Battle of Boxer heralded the establishment of the rule of the East Indian Company in the eastern part of Indian subcontinent. Which the Battle of Plessey secured a foothold for the British East Indian Company in the rich province of Bengal, the Battle of Boxer is really that made them the dominant force in India.

Fakir Movement:

Fakir Movement started/got momentum when the East Indian Company was granted Diwani in 1765 by the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II and as a result the Company inflicted oppressively exorbitant taxes on the Muslim peasants, and it continued until it was weakened in 1833 or 1834.

The objectives of Fakir Movement were to relieve the poor peasants, especially Muslims, of the tyranny and oppression of the British East India Company and the oppressive Zamindars and their over-taxation under its suzerainty and shelter. The second alleged objective of this movement was to loot the treasures of the East India Company and the Zamindars propagated those among the poor. But it was found later on that the Zamindars propagated those false stories to avert paying any revenue to the Company.

After two years, Fakir Movement again ensured in 1786 in Mymensing. Armed soldiers of the Company came to the rescue of the Zamindars this time, and the Fakirs were defeated and their movement subsided for long since then.

Fakir-sannyasi raids got intensified in 1776 in the districts of Bogra, Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Chittagong. During the period between 1777 and 1781 the Fakir-sannyas raids mainly continued in Bogra, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Chittagong, Sylhet and Mymensingh areas.

After the death of Majnu Shah his able lieutenants like Musa Shah, Cherag Ali Shah, Paragal Shah, Sobhan Shah, Madar Baksh, Jari Shah, Karim Shah, Kripanath, Rowshan Shah, Anup Narayan and Sri Nibash continued the revolt till the closing of the year 1800 and even up to 1812 AD. But after the death of Majnu Shah the movement was gradually losing its direction and dynamics. In the late 1790s, the rebels fell out and all parts of Bengal came under firm British control.

In 1826 a Fakir called Tipu Pagol organized a huge army comprising the peasants-subjects. He was a great sufi-saint. Tpu's mother was a charismatic woman who would inspire the people to revolt against the British-Zamindar injustices. In 1825 Tipu called upon people to stop paying tax to the Zamindars. Resultantly a battle ensure between the Zamindars' solders and those of Tipu where the former was completely discomfited. Thus the company came to the rescue of the Zamindars and they confiscated Tipu and his mother.

Faraizi Movement :

The first half of the 19th century witnessed a movement known as Faraizi Movement in East Bengal. The founder of this movement was Haji Shariatullah. At this time the condition of the Bengali Muslims in the Sub-continent was very miserable. The British Policy of distrust and oppression toward the Muslims rendered them economically and educationally crippled; and the oppression of the Zamindars made their lives unbearable. The Muslims were also barred to perform their religious duties. The Hindu Zamindars forbade cow-sacrifice and Azan pronouncements. They compelled the Muslims to pay tax for growing beard, imposed extortion during Hindu religious festivals, forced them to wear dhuti and grow mustache instead of beard. It was part of the blue print to efface Islamic culture from the muslim society. Haji Sharitullah came forward with the mission to save the muslims and their culture from this formidable attack.

He was born on 1784 pargana of Faridpur. When he was 18, Haji Shariatullah went to Mecca on the pilgrimage. He returned to his country after 20 years and studied all the known branches of religious society. He also came in touch with the reform movement of Abdul Wahab Nazdi and attracted to the puritan vision of this movement. After coming back, he stated his reform movement known as

the Faraizi movement. His movement basically targeted the most depressed class of the muslims.

The movement infused new life into the lives of the muslims of Bengal. It wrought great agitation among them, especially the peasants who were imbued with his doctrines. But a few groups from among the opportunists and favor-seekers muslims along with the British and Hindu Zamidars opposed this movement. Despite all these, the movement got tremendous popularity and took root in different parts of Bengal.

He was also attracted to the Jihadi Movement of Syed Ahmad Shaheed of Rai Bareilly and would send to the letter Mujahid, money from zakat, Fitrah and Sources.

Thus, he showed the seeds of independence in Bengal. He died in 1840.

2nd Phase

His son Muhammad Mohsin, known as Dadhu Mian, Succeeded Hji shariatullah. He was born on 1819. In 1831 he went to makkah for performing Hajj and came back after five years. He then joined his father's movement Dadhu Mian popularized and strengthened the movement by organizing it in a systematic way. He acquired great influence amongst the muslim peasants and craftsmen of Bakerganj, Dhaka, Faridpur and Pabna districts. He organized resistance to Hindu landlords and money lenders, boycotting the payment of taxes for the decoration of the image of durgah and interest charges. He also formed an armed force of cudgel bearers to attack the zamindars and their followers and then went one stage further by attempting to form a parallel Muslim government.

The British made persistent attempts to prosecute Miyan for crimes ranging from theft to murder, but all such allegations foundered from a lack of witnesses prepared to give evidence – though he was placed under arrest during the mutiny.

He asked his followers to settle in lands managed by the government. During the revolt of 1857, he was put under arrest for organizing the peasants of Faridpur districts against the British government. He died in 1860.

Shaheed Titu Mir :

Titu Mir (1782-1831) a peasant leader who resisted the oppression of the local zamindars and European indigo planters on the peasantry with ultimate object of liberating the country from British domination. He was a leader of the tariqah-i-muhammadiya in Bengal and his movement initially aimed at socio-religious reforms, elimination of the practice of shirk (pantheism) and bidat (innovation) in the muslim society and at inspiring the muslims to follow Islamic principles in their day to day life.

The real name of Titu mir was Sayyid Mir Nisar Ali. He was born on 14 Magh 1188 BS (1782 AD) at village Chandpur (controversially Haiderpur) under Bashirhat subdivision of the district of 24 parganas in West Bengal. His father was Sayyid Mir Hasan Ali and his mother's name was Abida Rokaiya Khatoon. Titu's family claimed descent from Hazrat Ali (R). His predecessor sayyid Shahadat Ali came to Bengal from Arabia to preach Islam.

Titu Mir had his early education in the village maktab and then entered into a local madrasah. He was a hafiz, excelled in three languages-Bangla, Arabic and Persian and developed keen interest in Arabic and Persian literature. He was well versed in Islamic theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, tasawwaf (Islamic mysticism) and mantiq. While a student in the madrasah Titu Mir grew up into a good gymnast and a renowned pahlwas (wrestler).

Titu Mir went on a pilgrimage to makka in 1822 AD and came in close contact with the great Islamic reformer and revolutionary leader sayyid Ahmed of Bareilly who inspired him to free his fellow countrymen from un-Islamic practices and foreign domination. On his return from makka in 1827 Titu Mir started preaching among the Muslims in the districts of 24 parganas and Nadia. He advised them to refrain from practicing shirk and bidaat and inspired them, especially the weavers and practicing, to follow the Islamic way of life.

Titu Mir built a strong fort with bamboo poles at Narkelbaria in October 1831, recruited Mujahids and gave them military training. The number of mujahids rose to nearly five thousand. Having completed his military preparation Titu Mir declared himself Badshah (king) and urged upon the people to participate in jihad against the British. He soon established his control over the districts of 24 parganas, Nadia and Faridpur. Titu Mir demanded tax from the zamindars of taki and Gobardanga who implored protection of the English. An English contingent was sent from Calcutta. But the combined forces sustained severe defeat in the hands of the mujahids. Subsequently Colonel Stewart consisting of 100 cavalry, 300 native infantry and artillery with two cannons.

In fact, Titu Mir did not want to engage in war with the British. It was instigated by the Hindu landlords and self-interested groups. It is reported that when Lieutenant Colonel Stewart arrived Narkelbaria in the night of 13 November 1831 and seized the whole village Titu Mir and his followers erected a fort with bamboo around the hujrah of Titu Mir for his protection which is known as Bamboo Fort of Titu Mir.

Syed Ahmad Shaheed :

Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly (b.1786 d.1831,) also called Syed Ahmad Shaheed, was a martyr from Rae Bareilly, India, and founder of the "the Way of the Prophet Muhammad " (Tariqah-I Muhhamdiyah), a revolutionary Islamic related to the family of Syed Ahmed Shah was from a family of Hasni Syeds, distantly Shaheed, as he became known, was born near Lucknow, in the town of Rae Bareilly (Bareilly) in 1786. There is a popular story about him that before his birth his mother saw in the dream that a sheet of paper written with her blood was hoisting in the air. It was interpreted in the way that her child which would be born soon would be a well-known personality in the history.

His father died while he was still young and after attempting to find employment in Delhi, Syed Ahmed decided he needed further education. In 1806, Syed Ahmed enrolled in the famous madrasa (Islamic religious school) of Shah Waliullah in Delhi. Syed Ahmed was amongst the generation of Muslims who were dismayed at the end of the Islamic Mughal Empire.

At the age of 18, Syed Ahmed arrived Lucknow to get jobs. Shortly after four months he abandoned the idea and came to be a student of Shah Abdul Aziz. He studied under him the major science of Islam, and Islamic spiritualism. But it was soon obvious that Syed Ahmed was not destined to be a great scholar, despite his piety. The later desire in him for the restoration and re-establishment of the Islamic administration/ Khilafat again stirred his thought, which was further inspired by Shah Abdul Aziz's declaration that British rule made the subcontinent Dar-ul-Harb, an area not under Islamic control. This implied that non-Muslim rule should be resisted and fought. Initially, however, it had to be resisted secretly so as not to attract British attention and hostility. Such a movement still required a leader and people who would be willing to fight for the cause.

Activism :

Syed Ahmed visited towns around the Punjab and the united provinces to whip up support and was joined by notable Muslim leaders. The initial force of a few hundred men led by Syed Ahmed could not reach the area directly from Delhi for obvious reasons and so had to proceed through the long and difficult route through Rajasthan, Sindh and Balochistan until they reached Kabul. Apart from the obvious need to avoid the Sikh forces at this stage, Syed Ahmed also collected support and troops along the way. In many areas the population was more enthusiastic than their rulers; the Mirs of Sindh were reluctant to fight with the Sikhs as was Bahawalpur, while Afghanistan was torn by internal differences. In spite of this, many men from these areas joined Syed Ahmed's forces.

Military Campaigns :

In 1826, the mujahideen, or Muslim army, launched its armed conflict. Attacks were made on Sikh forces in Okara. By the end of 1830 Peshawar was captured by the forces of the Jihad. This success encouraged other Pathan tribes to join Syed Ahmed. The Sikhs were now seriously concerned by this threat. They tried to spread dissent amongst the tribes supporting Syed Ahmed. This time Syed Ahmed encountered treachery and had to fight against three forces at the same time; the Sikhs, treacherous Pathan tribal leaders, and the owner of the fort Hund 'Khade Kha' who would always instigate the local Pathans against the mujahideen.