

<http://www.developindiagroup.co.in/>

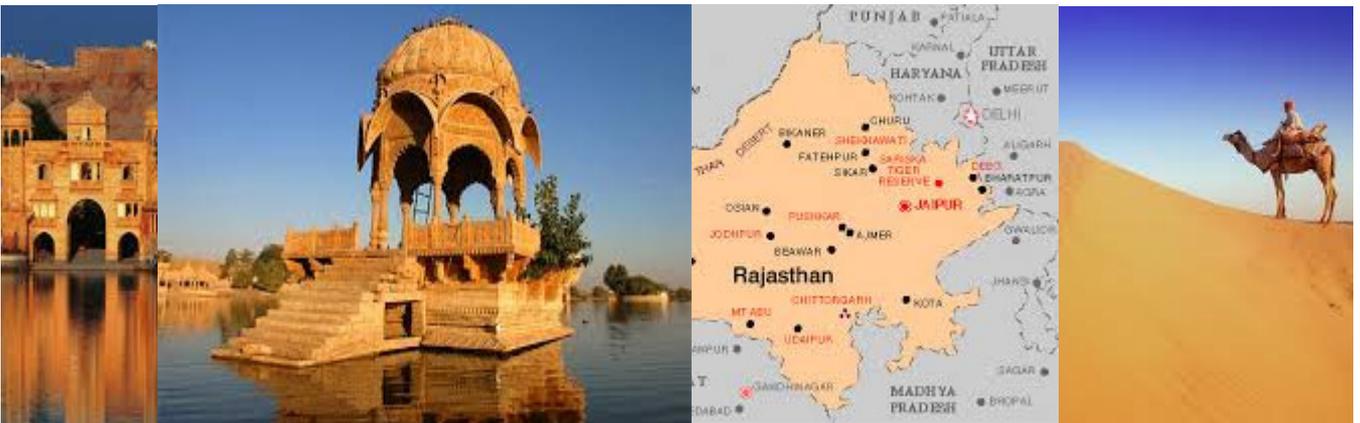
RAS/RTS

RAJASTHAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES COMBINED COMPETITIVE EXAM

REVISED STUDY MATERIALS

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND GENERAL STUDIES

PAPER - I



Published by
Develop India Group

HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA AND INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

In the ancient times, people from all over the world were keen to come to India. The Aryans came from Central Europe and settled down in India. The Persians followed by the Iranians and Parsis immigrated to India. Then came the Moghuls and they too settled down permanently in India. Chengis Khan, the Mongolian, invaded and looted India many times. Alexander the Great too, came to conquer India but went back after a battle with Porus. He-en Tsang from China came in pursuit of knowledge and to visit the ancient Indian universities of Nalanda and Takshila. Columbus wanted to come to India, but instead landed on the shores of America. Vasco da Gama from Portugal came to trade his country's goods in return for Indian species. The French came and established their colonies in India.

Lastly, the Britishers came and ruled over India for nearly 200 years. After the battle of Plassey in 1757, the British achieved political power in India. And their paramountcy was established during the tenure of Lord Dalhousie, who became the Governor-General in 1848. He annexed Punjab, Peshawar and the Pathan tribes in the north-west of India. And by 1856, the British conquest and its authority were firmly established. And while the British power gained its heights during the middle of the 19th century, the discontent of the local rulers, the peasantry, the intellectuals, common masses as also of the soldiers who became unemployed due to the disbanding of the armies of various states that were annexed by the British, became widespread. This

soon broke out into a revolt which assumed the dimensions of the 1857 Mutiny.

The Indian Mutiny of 1857

The conquest of India, which could be said to have begun with the Battle of Plassey (1757), was practically completed by the end of Dalhousie's tenure in 1856. It had been by no means a smooth affair as the simmering discontent of the people manifested itself in many localized revolt during this period. However, the Mutiny of 1857, which began with a revolt of the military soldiers at Meerut, soon became widespread and posed a grave challenge to the British rule. Even though the British succeeded in crushing it within a year, it was certainly a popular revolt in which the Indian rulers, the masses and the militia participated so enthusiastically that it came to be regarded as the First War of Indian Independence.

Introduction of zamindari system by the British, where the peasants were ruined through exorbitant charges made from them by the new class of landlords. The craftsmen were destroyed by the influx of the British manufactured goods. The religion and the caste system which formed the firm foundation of the traditional Indian society was endangered by the British administration. The Indian soldiers as well as people in administration could not rise in hierarchy as the senior jobs were reserved for the Europeans. Thus, there was all-round discontent and disgust against the British rule, which burst out in a revolt by the 'sepoys' at Meerut whose religious sentiments were offended

when they were given new cartridges greased with cow and pig fat, whose covering had to be stripped out by biting with the mouth before using them in rifles. The Hindu as well as the Muslim soldiers, who refused to use such cartridges, were arrested which resulted in a revolt by their fellow soldiers on May 9, 1857.

The rebel forces soon captured Delhi and the revolt spread to a wider area and there was uprising in almost all parts of the country. The most ferocious battles were fought in Delhi, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand, Allahabad, Agra, Meerut and western Bihar. The rebellious forces under the commands of Kanwar Singh in Bihar and Bakht Khan in Delhi gave a stunning blow to the British. In Kanpur, Nana Sahib was proclaimed as the Peshwa and the brave leader Tantya Tope led his troops. Rani Lakshmbai was proclaimed the ruler of Jhansi who led her troops in the heroic battles with the British. The Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and all the other brave sons of India fought shoulder to shoulder to throw out the British. The revolt was controlled by the British within one year, it began from Meerut on 10 May 1857 and ended in Gwalior on 20 June 1858.

Emergence of a National Consciousness

The material basis for the rise of Indian nationalism was provided by the political unification of the country. This was achieved in stage by 1858, when India came under the central authority of the Crown. A uniform system of administration all over the British-ruled territories brought the Indians under the jurisdiction of the British law and institutions, thus putting them in a common mould. The introduction of modern infrastructure like railways, telegraph, the postal system, development of roads, and motor transport by the British to serve their own eco-

nomical and strategic interests had the same unifying effect. Economic integration was brought about by the railways which began in 1853. Within two decades all the major towns of India were connected. It reduced the isolation and self-sufficiency of villages, encouraged the growth of internal trade, and helped in making different parts of the country inter-dependent. It led to the creation of a national market which facilitated exploitation of India as a whole, both as the source of raw materials and market for its goods. Even its labour force had a wide inter-regional base.

The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century represented the evolving national consciousness. They led to an intellectual and cultural renaissance which made a new vision of the future possible. The movements defended indigenous culture against western colonial intellectual domination. The reformation of Hinduism and a rational interpretation of its dogmas led to a remarkable strengthening of its hold over the masses. The spiritual unity of India propounded by the reformers acted as a great binding force on the minds of the people.

Modern literature in vernaculars (particularly prose) arose everywhere in close association with the reform movements. It was soon lent a patriotic flavour by the emerging Indian intelligentsia. In Bengal, the greatest single example is that of Bankim Chandra's historical novels, topped by Anandmath (1882) with its Vande Mataram hymn.

The emergence of the modern Indian intelligentsia provided the necessary thrust towards organising radical nationalist activities. The response of the Indian intellectuals of the first half of the 19th century to British rule was positive and was even described as 'providential'. They hoped that Britain,