

## # SOME IMPORTANT UPRISINGS

The simmering discontent of the peasants and tribal people broke out into popular uprisings in different parts of India at different points of time in the first hundred years of British rule. Whatever may be the immediate cause of each uprising by and large these protest movements were molded by a shared experience of oppression in various forms, including colonial oppression. We would discuss in brief some of the important uprisings of this period.

### # The Sanyasi Rebellion, 1763-1800

The East India Company's official correspondence in the second half of the eighteenth century referred many times to the incursion of the nomadic Sanyasis and Fakirs, mainly in northern Bengal. Even before the great famine of Bengal(1770) small groups( of Hindu and Muslim holymen travelled from place to place and made sudden attack on the store houses of food crops and property of the local richman and government office. Though the Sanyasis and Fakirs were religious mendicants, originally they were peasants, including some who were evicted from land. However, the growing hardship of the peasantry, increasing revenue demand and the Bengal famine of 1770 brought a large member of dispossessed small Zamindars, disbanded soldiers and rural poor into the bands of Sanyasis and Fakirs. They moved around different parts of Bengal and Bihar in bands of 5 to 7 thousand and adopted the guerilla technique of attack. Their target of attack was the grain stocks of the rich and at later stage, government officials. They looted local government treasuries.

Sometimes the wealth looted was distributed among the poor. They established an independent government in Bogra and Mymensingh. The contemporary government records describe these insurrections in their own way, thus: ,

"A set of lawless banditti known under the name of Sanyasis and Fakirs, have long infested these countries and under the pretence of religious pilgrimage, have been accustomed to traverse the chief parts of Bengal, begging, stealing and plundering wherever they go and as it best suits their convenience to practice. In the years subsequent to the famine, their ranks were swollen by a crowd of starving peasants, who had neither seed nor implements to recommence cultivation with, and the cold weather of 1772 brought them down upon the harvest fields of lower Bengal, burning, plundering, revaging in bodies of 50 to thousand men."