

Tai - Ping Rebellion

Emperor Tao-kwang who ruled China from 1820 to 1850 was a feeble and inefficient ruler. One rebellion took place between 1851 to 1863⁶⁴ against the Manchu rulers which came to be known as the Tai - Ping Rebellion.

(Factors responsible for Tai - Ping Rebellion
(Khurana)

- Internal Disturbance.
- Economic Disorder :-
- Peasant Unrest :-
- Secret Committees
- Military Causes :-
- Country wide Chaos :-
- leader of Tai Ping Rebellion.
Hung Hsiu

The impact of the Western powers in China was highly injurious to the Manchu Rulers. It shook the very foundation of the Manchu dynasty. The Opium Wars which opened the doors of China to the Western Powers, exposed the weakness of the Manchu Rulers. It encouraged the anti-Manchu elements inside the country and fostered several anti-Manchu rebellions.

According to Chinese philosophy of ancient era, poverty, sickness, starvation and confusion in the internal system of the country always inspired the public to get rid of their king as all these troubles and natural calamities are the result of the deeds of the contemporary rulers. The following reasons contributed to the outbreak of this revolt. —

Internal Disturbance

After the death of Emperor Tao Kuang Tsien Feng ascended the throne of China in 1850 A.D. He was a weak, luxurious ruler. As a result, chaos, confusion and corruption began to crop up in the entire empire. The prevailing social order in China during these days was somewhat offending to the peasants, artisans and poorer gentry. They were tortured by the handful of royal officials, merchants and wealthy gentry in various ways.

Economic Disorder :- The economic condition of China during the Manchu Rule was partially responsible for the outbreak of this rebellion. There was no equal distribution of land, in large holdings and the poor peasants, the real tillers of the soil, were put to the mercy of the landlords for a piece of land. (The people of Kwangshi, Kwantung and Hunan were the worst victims of it). Starvation and malnutrition broke the morale of the people of China. Large scale importation of the finished foreign goods also shattered the rural economy of China. It affected the cottage industry. Another economic factor which was especially injurious to the Tax payers was the sudden increase of the value of silver in comparison to copper. The Tax burden of the peasants increased tremendously. Thus the economic maladjustment in the country infuriated millions of poor and unprivileged people who were out to join the rebellion.

Floods and famine aggravated the economic distress in South China. The people of Kwangshi, Kwantung and Hunan provinces of China suffered a lot due to recurring flood which caused constant failure of crops. The corrupt govt failed to tackle the situation to redress the minimum grievances of the hungry millions.

Several secret committees were established in China because of the weakness of the central govt. They organised some small armed troops

with the economic help of the traders. The chief aim of these secret assemblies was to oust these foreigners from China and free the country from the clutches of the Manchu rulers. All these committees considered the Treaty of Nanking was responsible for these situation and so they were making efforts to uproot the Govt - which was not capable to safeguard the country.

Military Causes :- The defeat of China at the hands of England had an adverse effect upon the Manchu Govt. The common mass of China had some respect for the Emperor and the Imperial army. But the defeat in the war greatly undermined the prestige of the Manchu Govt. The Manchu rulers never encouraged their warriors for inter-caste marriage so that their bravery not be effected adversely because of mixture of blood. But after the middle of the 18th century as the result of the ignorant policy of Manchu rulers, not only military capability of Manchu soldiers was effected but also discontentment emerged among them. The military officers were corrupted so much that they often swallowed the salaries to be paid

to the soldier and ^{recruited} untrained labourers and coolies - time of need. The efficiency of the sole was also adversely effected due to non-payment of their salaries and for want of proper training. As a result the military power began to weaken day by day with the Anglo-Chinese war. As most of them rendered unemployed, they found some engagement in the rebellion. They were further inspired to join the rebels due to their possession of the arms and ammunitions.

Country wide chaos:- Political resentment against the alien Manchus was no less an important factor which fostered the movement. The Chinese people had an inherent hatred towards the Manchus rulers whom they considered to be foreigners to China. This anti-Manchu attitude was more acute among the people of South China and in an ethnic group called 'Hakka'. Between 1774 and 1840 several secret societies had been organised to foment rebellions almost in every province of China. These movements were certainly the forerunners of the T'ai-P'ing rebellion and they became the sources of inspiration to the T'ai-P'ing rebels.

In fact the period between 1840 to 1851 A.D. was an era of revolt which took place

everywhere in order to uproot the govt
of the Manchu. In spite of their best efforts
the Manchu rulers completely failed to
suppress this revolt for one year. Flames
of rebellion ablazed in Formosa in 1844 A.D.
There was reign of anarchy in southern
region of Kwang-Tung, Kwangse and
Hunnan. The govt declared this revolt
an "Armed Robbery" while this revolt
was motivated with the feelings of nationalism.
The chief mission of this revolt was to
turn out the weak Manchu rulers and
the foreigners from their country.

The leader of the Tai-Ping revolt
was Hung-Hsin-Chuan. Born in 1814 to a
Hakka parents in a village near Canton in
the province of Kwantung, Hung Hsin-Chuan
began his professional career as a village
teacher. His father was a farmer by profession.
He tried to clear the higher provincial tests
so that he could get good post in administrative
services but he did not succeed in his
mission. At the same time he came in
contact with American priest Mr. Issachar
Robert and inclined towards Christianity
which gave him great mental peace. Later
he adopted the principles of Christianity and
took up the responsibility of preaching them.
Observing the increasing number of his followers,
the central govt banned his preaching.

but Hung did not stop preaching.

Hung organised a committee of worshippers of God. It was named Shang - Ti - Hui Committee. It got constant support of public. This organization directed its attention to the political field due to weakness of the Manchu rulers and deplorable political condition of the country. Now its chief aim was to set off the supremacy of feeble Manchu rulers and establish law and order and discipline in the country. As restrictions were imposed on this organization it got momentum and rose to prominence.

The terrible famine which was emerged in Kwang Tung in 1849 A.D. and Govt. had failed to tackle the problem, Hung considered it worth while for the end of Manchu govt. So he invited members of Shang - Ti - Hui committee from far and wide and declared the establishment of T'ai Ping Tien - Kua (Divine Empire of Great Peace) on 11, January 1851 A.D. before all of his followers. He himself resumed the title of Tun - Wang (Heavenly Emperor) and establish revolutionary govt. After this the rebellious army began to attack over several places. First of all the revolutionaries tried their best to get victory over different parts of the country with the help of army and established their control on Hi - Hwan - Yang, Wu - Chang

Wu-hu etc places. The revolutionary govt declared Nanking as their capital and established their influence over Chin-Kiang, Yang chao and Kuo-chao. Hung was efficient declared his kingdom a godly state. Hung was efficient from Political, military and diplomatic point of view, he hesitated in making an invasion on Peking and he only endeavoured to establish his control on south provinces and after having established his authority of the 18th provinces, he started his regular administration over China.

Generally, the Tai-Ping rebellion was not against the foreigners, it was against the Manchu rulers. In the outset the relations between the Tai-Ping rebels and foreigners were quite cordial. In fact - Taiping rebellion was an active movement against the social system, the basis of which was ancient philosophy of Confucius. In fact - this revolt was a crusade against feudalism and idol worships. Basically it was a peasant movement, which wanted to give the ownership of land, the basis of production to the farmers.

Some other historians and scholars were of the opinion that this revolt was a democratic progressive movement, the chief aim of which was to free the Chinese from the conservatism.