

Chapter

2

Revolt of 1857

The Revolt of 1857 was not a sudden occurrence but the culmination of a century long tradition of popular resistance to the Company's rule. Neither was it merely a result of sepoy discontent but a result of accumulated grievances of people against the foreign rule and its administration.

For the last 100 years, the East India Company had been conquering the country bit by bit and then plundered and exploited it, till it was milked dry. The impact of British Rule was felt on all spheres of Indian life whether polity, economy, administration, culture and religion; and had adversely affected the position of all including rulers of Indian states, sepoys, landlords, peasants, traders, pundits and maulvis and others. The only exception was the English educated middle class which owed its origin to the British. As a result, resistance was offered against the colonial rule at various times from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century. But the Revolt of 1857, also termed as the First War of Independence, posed the most serious challenge to the British supremacy in India and shook the Empire to its very foundations.

The Revolt first started as a sepoy mutiny but soon it was joined by thousands of peasants and civilian population and spread widely in northern and central India. This linkage of the army with the masses naturally proved to be dangerous for the colonial rulers.

CAUSES OF THE REVOLT

The British historians tend to emphasise the issue of the greased cartridges as the most important cause of the Revolt of 1857. But the modern Indian historians are of the view that the causes lay deeper and are to be found in the 100 years of British Rule from Plassey in 1757 to the rebellion of Mangal Pandey in 1857. The issue of greased cartridge ignited the simmering discontent accumulated over the last 100 years on account of socio-political and economic grievances.

Political Causes

Annexations of Princely States

The Company made several annexations under **Wellesley's subsidiary alliance** and **Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse** (Satara 1848, Jaitpur 1849, Sambalpur 1849, Baghat 1850, Udaipur



Lord Dalhousie (the Governor-General of India from 1848 to 1856), devised the Doctrine of Lapse.

1852, Jhansi 1853, Nagpur 1854). The Indians shared a common fear that the absorption of all states was now merely a matter of time. It was also believed that the annexations were not because of Doctrine of Lapse but because of 'lapse of morals' on the part of the East India Company. Thus, the expansionist policy followed by the Company gravely embittered the rulers of the Indian States, forcing them to rise in revolt, as is clear from the following examples.

Jhansi: Jhansi was a Maratha-ruled princely state in the Bundelkhand region. In 1853, the Raja of Jhansi, Gangadhar Rao, had died without leaving a biological male heir. The same year Dalhousie applied the **Doctrine of Lapse** and annexed Jhansi, rejecting the claim of Damodar Rao (adopted son of Rani and her late husband Gangadhar Rao) to the throne. Further, in March 1854, Rani was given an annual pension of ₹60,000 and ordered to leave the palace and the fort. Aggrieved, the Rani decided to raise the banner of revolt and joined the great uprising of 1857 against the British rule.

Awadh: In 1856, Awadh was annexed on the pretext of **misgovernance**, dethroning Nawab Wajid Ali Shah who was later deported to Calcutta. The reason stated by Dalhousie was that he wanted to free the people from the Nawab's mismanagement and taluqdar's oppression! The British had already been draining the Awadh economy since 1765, thus draining its administrative viability. This final move of annexation severely hurt the self-respect of the Awadh people, particularly the sepoys of the British army since most of them came from Awadh itself. The dismissal of the court also meant unemployment for the many courtiers, the artisans and the army men. The taluqdars were dispossessed of their estates and their forts demolished. The land revenue settlement introduced in Awadh after annexation further intensified the people's discontent with the cumulative result that nearly three-fourth of the adult population of Awadh participated in the Revolt of 1857.

Nana Sahib: Nana, the **adopted son of the last Peshwa Baj Rao II**, was refused pension by the British that was being paid to Baji Rao. Nana was also forced to vacate Pune, his family seat, and live far away at Kanpur. Thus, when the rebellion broke out in 1857, it was Nana Sahib who raised the banner of revolt at Kanpur.

As stated by Malleeson, 'The policy of Dalhousie had created bad faith and Indians got the feeling that the British were 'playing the wolf in the garb of the lamb'.

Abolition of Regal Titles

The Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II, had grown old and weak. Lord Dalhousie recognised the succession of Mughal Prince Faqir-ud-Din, but he was not in favour of retaining an **imperium**



Rani Laxmi Bai



Nawab Wajid Ali Shah

in imperio (empire within an empire) and imposed strict conditions on him. In 1856, Faqir-ud-Din died and Lord Canning (who was also the Governor-General during the Revolt of 1857) declared that the prince next in succession would have to renounce the regal title and the ancestral Mughal palaces. This grievously hurt the feelings of Muslim subjects who felt that the British wanted to humble the House of Timur. In addition to the Mughal Emperor, the British also abolished the regal titles of the Nawabs of Carnatic and Tanjore.

The Alien Rule of the British

India has had a long history of foreign invasions and even before the British, several foreigners had ruled over different parts of the country, for instance, the Afghans and the Mughals had conquered India but in course of time they had settled here and made India their home. Whatever revenue they collected from the people, it was spent in India itself. But this was not so in the case of the British. The British never intended to settle down in India and make it their home. The officials of the Company wanted to make as much money as possible here and then quickly go back to England. As a result, the British remained perpetual foreigners in India.

Further, the practice of '**absentee sovereignty**', i.e., rule by foreigners from a distant land, also embittered the Indians against the British. They had begun to feel that they were being ruled by officials from England, who were draining their own land of its wealth.

Economic and Administrative Causes

Exploitative Land Revenue Settlements Introduced by the British

The various land revenue settlements (Permanent, Ryotwari and Mahalwari settlements) introduced by the British meant loss of land for the landholders and heavy taxation for zamindars and cultivators. The land revenue assessments under all the systems were heavy and oppressive, reaching upto 50 per cent or more of the produce and tax was extracted even when the crop was fully damaged. In such cases, the cultivators had no option but to take loans from the local money lenders who charged them exorbitant interest. This made the cultivators heavily indebted. Many of them later participated in the Revolt of 1857, driving away government officials and burning money lenders' records.

The economic decline of the peasantry also found expression in **12 major and several minor famines** from 1770 to 1857. The **complex judicial system** also aided the rich in oppressing the poor. Flogging and jailing of cultivators for arrears was common. The miserable condition of the peasants made them desperate to join a revolt against their oppressors.

Destruction of Indian Trade, Handicraft and Industry

The economic policies of the British in India also destroyed the Indian traders, artisans and industrialists. The Company's traders enjoyed various privileges such as duty-free trade, which made their goods comparatively cheaper than those of the Indian traders, who had to pay full



Lord Canning, the Governor General during the Revolt

duties and made their goods uncompetitive. Similarly, the Company destroyed Indian handicrafts and industry in an attempt to convert India into a market for British manufactures.

Thus, driven by self-interest, the British destroyed the two major sources of employment, i.e. agriculture and handicrafts, for the vast population of the country.

Alienation of the Upper and Middle Classes

Under the administration of local princes and chieftains, Indian served at all levels—both lower and upper. But under British administration, all higher posts were reserved for the Europeans. Indians could serve only as subordinates and occupied all petty posts. The dissolution of princely courts also meant loss of job for cultural persons such as the poets, dramatists, writers, and musicians, who were patronised by the princes.

Further, in some provinces, the British had made land revenue settlements directly with the cultivators. This dispossessed many landlords and taluqdars of their lands and position. As if this was not enough, a British official, Coverly Jackson, demanded strict enquiry into the titles of the taluqdars of Awadh, who were the hardest hit, and drove Awadh into the vortex of the rebellion. In 1852, the Inam Commission was appointed in Bombay and confiscated nearly 20,000 estates. Thus, it is clear that the land revenue settlements introduced by the British had an adverse impact even on Indian aristocracy, driving them into poverty without even benefitting the cultivators. 'Peasants visiting their previous landlords with tears in their eyes' had become a common sight.

Social and Religious Causes

Arrogant Attitude of the British and Racial Discrimination

Like all conquerors, even the British were arrogant and rude towards their subject population. They felt racially superior and treated the Indians with contempt, often describing them as 'barbarians' or 'uncivilised'. The behaviour of English officers was particularly contemptuous, who commonly spoke of Indians as 'nigger' and abused them. Criminal assaults on Indians by Englishmen were also common, but the Whites were seldom punished as they were tried by European judges who acquitted them with light or no punishment. Such repeated insults had begun to simmer in the hearts of the subjects like a burning sore.

British Interference in Religion and Culture

It may still be easy to withstand political and economic exploitation but religious persecution embitters the very soul of a subject population. That conversion of Indians into Christianity was a clear aim of the British is certain from the speech of Mangles, the Chairman of the Directors of East India Company, who declared in the house of Commons, 'Providence has entrusted the extensive empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other.'

The Charter of 1813 allowed missionaries to go to India and also allowed them to settle there under a licence. Christian missionaries and religious persons such as Charles Grunt, Chairman of Court of Directors, felt that Westernisation would help in the spread of Christianity, and in

this hope, they opened several modern schools, colleges and hospitals. According to Vir Savarkar, the military officials abused the very name of Ram and Mohammad in front of the sepoys and tempted them into embracing Christianity by promises of promotion.

The British had also begun to interfere in the socio-cultural affairs of the country. For instance, legislations were passed regarding prohibition of female infanticide, sati and slavery and passing of legislation regarding widow remarriage. In 1850, the Religious Disabilities Act was passed which modified certain Hindu customs; for example, it stated that a change of religion would not debar a son from inheriting the property of his heathen father.

Thus, Indians had begun to feel that their religion and culture was in danger. The atmosphere had become so charged with suspicion that even railways and telegraph began to be looked upon as instruments of conversion. The rebels referred to the telegraph as 'the accursed string that strangled them' and the education offices set up by the British as 'shaitani daftars'. In such a context, the greased cartridge incident proved a trigger and convinced both the Hindus and the Muslims that the British were deliberately trying to destroy their religion.

Military Causes

Grievances of the Sepoys

Over the years, several grievances of the sepoys in the British army had got accumulated. But first we need to understand who were these sepoys and where did they come from.

The sepoys in the British army were in reality, 'peasants in uniform'. Owing to the impoverishment caused by the new land revenue settlements, many of them had joined military service to supplement their agricultural income (only to realise that life was equally tough and exploitative for an Indian sepoy!). Further, in the Bengal Army, service was hereditary and nearly three-fifth of the sepoys came from peasant population of Awadh and the high caste Brahmin and Rajput families of North-West Provinces. Naturally, these sepoys reflected all the grievances of the civil population of Awadh as well as the grievances of the high caste and royal families.

Thus, annexations of princely states did not go down well with these sepoys. Particularly when Awadh was annexed, they suddenly realized that the Company had used their services to liquidate their own King.

Maulana Azad stated that, 'Annexation of Awadh marked the beginning of a rebellious mood in the army generally and in the Bengal army in particular...it gave a rude shock to the people.'

Other causes of growing resentment among the sepoys may be understood under the following heads:

Professional Grievances

- An Indian sepoy was paid one-third the salary of a European sepoy (7-9 monthly).
- There was racial discrimination in matters of promotion and pension.
- Indian sepoys were treated roughly, abused and humiliated.

- They were forced to serve in far-away regions without payment of any extra batta (allowance).
- They were no longer gifted with jagirs and other prizes for their meritorious deeds, as was the case under Indian rulers.
- In 1854, the **Post Office Act** was passed which withdrew the free-postage privilege of the sepoys.

Religious Grievances

In addition to the above, the upper caste sepoys found that their service conditions frequently came in conflict with their religious beliefs.

- The high caste sepoys resented the part of army discipline that treated them at par with the low caste recruits.
- In 1806, at **Vellore**, the turban was replaced by a leather cockade. This caused the sepoys to rise in mutiny.
- In 1824, the sepoys at Barrackpore refused to go to Burma as crossing the sea meant loss of caste. The regiment was disbanded and some leaders put to death.
- In 1844, the sepoys of Bengal Army refused to go to Sind as crossing Indus again meant loss of caste.
- In 1856, **General Service Enlistment Act** was passed by the Canning government—it stated that all future recruits of the Bengal army would have to give an undertaking to serve anywhere their service might be required by the government. This act aroused wide-scale hostility since the sepoys who had gone to Afghanistan during 1839–42 Afghan invasion, had not been readmitted into the folds of their castes.
- Closer to 1857, there were reports of bone dust in flour ration.

Invincibility of British Rule Shattered

In the years immediately preceding the Revolt, the British army suffered major reverses in wars such as the First Afghan War (1838–42), Punjab Wars (1845–49) and the Crimean War (1854–56). In 1855–56, the powerful Santhal uprising took place and temporarily swept away the British from their area. These events had lowered the general morale of the British soldiers but had added immensely to the confidence of the Indian masses, particularly the sepoys who had begun to feel that if they struck at that hour, they had reasonable chances of success against their foreign perpetrators. Thus, the sepoys were only waiting for the right occasion and the occasion was supplied by the greased cartridges incident.

Immediate Cause

In 1857, the old-fashioned musket 'Brown Bess' was replaced by the **new Enfield Rifle**. Its cartridges were covered with a greased paper which had to be bitten off before the cartridge was loaded into the rifle. A rumour gained currency in the Bengal Army that this grease was made of **beef and pig fat**. This completely outraged the religious sentiments of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys and they were now convinced that the British were deliberately trying to destroy their religion. This issue of Enfield Rifles became the immediate cause of the Revolt of 1857.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MUTINY AND THE REVOLT

The Revolt of the Army

Initial Stages

Even before the Meerut incident of 10 May, there were rumblings of resentment at various cantonments. On **2 February 1857**, the 19th Bengal Native Infantry at Berhampur refused to use the newly introduced rifle and was disbanded in March the same year. Again, on **29 March 1857**, in Barrackpore near Calcutta, the sepoys of 34th Native Infantry refused to use the greased cartridges. One young Brahmin sepoy, **Mangal Pandey**, went a step further and killed one of his European officers. Pandey was overpowered and hanged and his regiment too, was disbanded.

The Revolt Begins (Meerut, 10 May 1857)

In May 1857 at Meerut, 85 sepoys of the 3rd Cavalry regiment were court-martialled and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment on their refusal to use the greased cartridges. Thereafter, on 10 May 1857, sepoys stationed at Meerut broke out in open rebellion, killed some of their European officers, released some of their fellow sepoys and marched to Delhi to appeal to Bahadur Shah II, the Mughal Emperor and a pensioner of the British, to lead the revolt and give legitimacy to their cause; though at this time Bahadur Shah possessed nothing but the name of the mighty Mughals.



Bahadur Shah Zafar

On 12 May 1857, Delhi was seized by the rebels after they overcame **Lieutenant Willoughby**, the commanding officer at Delhi. Some European inhabitants of Delhi were shot at and killed, the palace occupied and Bahadur Shah was proclaimed Emperor. The loss of Delhi was a serious blow of prestige for the British.

The Revolt of the People

In the next 24 hours, what began as a sepoy mutiny swelled into a **full-scale political rebellion**. As soon as the gunshots fired at the British officers were heard, people from surrounding areas joined in, including the peasants, artisans, shop keepers, traders, labourers, zamindars, pundits, maulvis, etc. They burnt the bungalows of the British, looted the military bazaars, cut the telephone wires and stopped horsemen carrying messages to Delhi. Once the sepoys reached Delhi, they proclaimed the old Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India.

In the next one month (from 11 to 30 May), the entire Bengal army rose in rebellion. The Revolt was joined by almost half of the sepoys of the Company, the bulk of whom were upper caste Hindus and nearly one-third came from Awadh. Soon the rebellion spread throughout **Northern and Central India at Lucknow, Allahabad, Kanpur, Bareilly, Banaras, in parts of Bihar, Jhansi** and other places. The worst affected areas were Western Bihar, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Delhi

and the region between the Chambal and the Narmada. Luckily for the British, bulk of Indian rulers remained loyal and extended valuable support in suppression of the rebellion. In fact, **India south of Narmada remained practically undisturbed.**

Between Delhi and Calcutta, wherever there were Indian troops, they revolted. The people in the city and countryside quickly joined in. The Indian troops burned barracks and court houses, flung open the prison gates, plundered government treasury. In the city, the people attacked British establishments such as revenue offices, courts and thanas. In the countryside, people surrounded the zamindars and the moneylenders; destroyed their account books and government records. In this way, the **rebels tried to destroy every symbol of British power.**

Even in places where the people did not directly participate in the revolt, they offered their help and sympathy. They offered food and shelter to the rebels and misled the British troops by giving wrong information. Both Hindu and Muslim sepoys demonstrated solid unity.

Hindu-Muslim Unity During the Revolt

Much of the strength of the revolt came from Hindu-Muslim unity which was seen reaching a new peak in 1857. The rebels had unanimously proclaimed Bahadur Shah Zafar, a Muslim, as their leader. The Hindus and Muslim sepoys respected each other's religious sentiments. For instance, cow slaughter was immediately banned in several affected areas, as a symbol of solidarity. A British officer Aitcheson bitterly complained-'In this instance, we could not play off the Mohammedans against the Hindus.' The events of 1857 clearly bring out that the people and politics of India were not really communal before 1858.

THE STORM CENTRES AND THE LEADERS

Several storm centres emerged in north India, covering present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. These included Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Jhansi and Arrah. These centres threw up their own leaders who accepted Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India but remained independent for all practical purposes. In the absence of any leaders from their own ranks, the rebels had turned to traditional leaders—the princes and landed aristocrats who had suffered at the hands of the British.

Delhi (12 May 1857, Led by Bahadur Shah and Bakht Khan)

On 12 May 1857, Delhi was seized by the rebels after they overcame **Lieutenant Willoughby**, the commanding officer at Delhi. Some European inhabitants of Delhi were shot at and killed, the palace was occupied and Bahadur Shah was proclaimed Emperor. However, the real command lay in the hands of a Court of soldiers (consisting of 10 members, 6 of them from the army) led by Bakht Khan. Bakht Khan had earlier served as a Subedar of artillery in the British army. Leading the revolt of the sepoys in Bareilly, he brought them to Delhi where he now emerged as a popular leader.

Lucknow (4 June 1857, Led by Begum Hazrat Mahal, the Begum of Awadh)

At Lucknow, the revolt was led by the Begum Hazrat Mahal who declared her son Birjis Kadr as the Nawab of Awadh. The Begum gained the support of the sepoys, peasants and zamindars of Awadh and drove away the British (including British **Resident Henry Lawrence**) who took refuge in the Residency building. The rebels soon attacked the residency, killing Sir Henry. British officers Havelock and Outram tried in vain to relieve Lucknow. It was only in November 1857 that **Sir Colin Campbell**, sent from England, recaptured Lucknow with the help of Gorkha regiments and evacuated the residency.

Kanpur (5 June 1857, Led by Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope)

On 5 June, the sepoys at Kanpur rose in rebellion and declared Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, as the Peshwa. General Sir **Hugh Wheeler** commanding the station finally surrendered on 27 June. Most of the fighting, however, was carried out by Tatya Tope, Nana's able and experienced Lieutenant, on his behalf; and it was Tatya who rose to immortality with his patriotism and skilful guerrilla fighting. Azimullah was another loyalist of Nana Sahib who had an expertise in political propaganda.

The counter operations for recovering Kanpur were closely associated with the recovery of Lucknow. On 6 December, Sir Campbell recovered Kanpur following which Tatya Tope escaped and joined Rani Laxmi Bai at Jhansi.

Jhansi (June 1857, Led by Rani Laxmi Bai)

In 1853, Dalhousie had applied the **Doctrine of Lapse** and annexed Jhansi, rejecting the claim of Damodar Rao (adopted son of Rani and her late husband Gangadhar Rao) to the throne. When the Rebellion broke out in 1857, Jhansi quickly emerged as a storm centre. The troops of Jhansi raised the banner of revolt under the leadership of Rani Laxmi Bai, and proclaimed her as the ruler of the state.

Though the Rani showed some hesitation in the beginning, she fought valiantly once she joined the ranks of the rebels. In fact, she is considered as the most outstanding leader of the revolt who later emerged for Indian nationalists as a symbol of resistance to the British Raj.

Deciding to fight for independence from the British rule, the Rani assumed control over Jhansi administration. She bravely defended Jhansi against British troops when **Sir Hugh Rose** besieged Jhansi on 23 March 1858. Rani raised the battle cry, '**Mera Jhansi, deugi nahin**' and the struggle went on for two weeks. Meanwhile, Kanpur fell and Tatya Tope escaped and joined the Rani of Jhansi. Soon Jhansi also fell but Rani managed to escape in the guise of a man with Damodar Rao on her back, joining Tatya's forces at Gwalior. The Scindia ruler of Gwalior decided to remain loyal to the English and took shelter at Agra.

Bareilly (Led by Khan Bahadur Khan)

Khan Bahadur Khan was the descendant of the former ruler of Rohilkhand. He was dissatisfied with the pension being granted to him by the British and joined the revolt. He raised an army of 40,000 soldiers and proclaimed himself the Nawab Nazim of his new government.

Arrah (25 July 1857, Bihar, Led by Kunwar Singh)

Kunwar Singh was a ruined zamindar of Jagdishpur. He was an old man in his seventies and nursed a grudge against the British who had dispossessed him of his estates. He unhesitatingly joined the sepoys and emerged as one of the most outstanding military leaders of the revolt as the British dreaded him the most.

Another popular leader was Maulavi Ahmadullah of Faizabad. He was originally from Madras and had moved to Faizabad where he preached armed rebellion. He is counted among the most acknowledged leaders of the Revolt in Awadh.

In addition to the above, there were several unsung heroes and martyrs of the Revolt. These were the sepoys, the peasants and the small zamindars who had come together forgetting their differences of class, caste and religion, and raised their voice against the British rule.

THE DEFEAT OF THE REBELS

Delhi Recaptured (20 September 1857, Led by John Nicholson)

The recapture of Delhi was of great psychological importance for the British and they directed all their energies towards it. Hence, Delhi was the first to fall, though after a prolonged battle. Finally, on 20 September 1857, the British recaptured Delhi with the help of forces rushed from Punjab. However, John Nicholson, the leading British officer was grievously injured and he later died. Terrible vengeance was wreaked on the inhabitants of Delhi. The Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, who had been hiding in Humayun's Tomb, was taken prisoner and exiled to Rangoon where he later died in 1862. Two minor sons and a grandson of the Emperor were also captured and publicly shot by Lieutenant Hudson himself. In this way, the last of the Mughals were finally extinguished and with the capture of Delhi, the focal point of the Revolt was lost.

With the fall of Delhi, the back of the revolt was broken and one after the other, all the other main leaders of the revolt also fell-



Capture of Bahadur Shah Zafar and his sons by William Hudson at Humayun's tomb on 20 September 1857.

Kanpur Recaptured (6 December 1857, Led by Sir Colin Campbell)

On 6 December 1857, Kanpur was occupied by Sir Colin Campbell. Nana Sahib was defeated and he later escaped to Nepal. Tatya Tope also escaped and joined Rani Laxmi Bai at Jhansi.

Lucknow Recaptured (March 1858, Led by Sir Colin Campbell)

After Lucknow was recaptured, Begum Hazrat Mahal escaped to Nepal.

Jhansi Recaptured (3 April 1858, Led by Sir Hugh Rose)

After Jhansi fell, Rani managed to escape in the guise of a man with Damodar Rao on her back, joining Tatya's forces at Gwalior. The Rani died fighting the British clad in a soldier's uniform on the ramparts of the fort on 17 June 1858. General Hugh Rose, who had defeated her, said in her praise and memory, 'here lay the woman who was the only man among the rebels.'

Tatya Tope fled into the jungles of central India and fought bitter guerrilla warfare. In April 1859, he was later betrayed by a friend and caught by the British while asleep. He was tried and hurriedly put to death the same year.

In May 1858, the English recaptured Bareilly and Jagdishpur. By 1859, Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, Bakht Khan of Delhi and Maulvi Ahmadullah of Faizabad were all dead. A rebellion at Banaras was mercilessly suppressed by Colonel Neil, who put to death all rebels and even suspected persons.

In this way, by July 1858, the revolt had been almost completely suppressed and by the end of 1859, the British authority in India was firmly re-established. The British had poured in immense supplies of men and material into the country and the Indians had to repay this entire cost through their own suppression.

Prelim Capsule

Revolt of 1857

Date	Place	Main Event
2 nd Feb 1857	Berhampur	19 th Bengal Native Infantry at Berhampur (Orissa) refused to use the newly introduced rifle.
29 th Mar 1857	Barrackpore	34 th Native Infantry refused to use the greased cartridges. Mangal Pandey, a Brahmin sepoy, killed one of his European officers. Pandey was hanged and his regiment disbanded.
10 th May 1857	Meerut	Sepoys of 3 rd Cavalry regiment broke out in open rebellion against the use of the greased cartridges and marched to Delhi to appeal to Bahadur Shah II to lead the revolt.

12 th May 1857	Delhi	The rebels occupied the palace and proclaimed Bahadur Shah as Emperor. However, the real command lay in the hands of Bakht Khan .
4 th Jun 1857	Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal who declared her son Birjis Kadr as the Nawab of Awadh.
5 th Jun 1857	Kanpur	The sepoys declared Nana Sahib , the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, as the Peshwa. Most of the fighting, however, was carried out by Tatya Tope .
June 1857	Jhansi	The troops of Jhansi raised the banner of revolt under the leadership of Rani Laxmi Bai , and proclaimed her as the ruler of the state.
—	Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan raised an army of 40,000 soldiers and proclaimed himself the Nawab Nazim of his new government.
25 th Jul 1857	Arrah	The revolt was led by Kunwar Singh, a ruined zamindar of Jagdishpur .
Recapture		
20 th Sep 1857	Delhi	Recaptured by John Nicholson with the help of forces rushed from Punjab. Bahadur Shah was captured and exiled to Rangoon. His two sons were publicly shot by Lieutenant Hudson .
6 th Dec 1857	Kanpur	Recaptured by Sir Colin Campbell . Nana Sahib was defeated and he later escaped to Nepal. Tatya Tope also escaped and joined Rani Laxmi Bai at Jhansi.
March 1858	Lucknow	Recaptured by Sir Colin Campbell . Begum Hazrat Mahal escaped to Nepal.
3 rd Apr 1858	Jhansi	Recaptured by Sir Hugh Rose . Rani managed to escape in the guise of a man with Damodar Rao on her back, joining Tatya's forces at Gwalior. The Rani died fighting the British clad in a soldier's uniform on the ramparts of the fort.
		Tatya tope fled into the jungles of central India and fought bitter guerilla warfare. In April 1859, he was caught by the British, tried and hurriedly put to death the same year.
May 1858	Bareilly & Jagdishpur	Recaptured.

CAUSES OF FAILURE OF THE REVOLT

The Revolt did not Embrace the Entire Country

Even though the revolt engulfed vast territory and received widespread sympathy, yet it could not embrace the entire country. India south of the Narmada remained largely unaffected. Punjab remained well controlled under John Lawrence. Rajasthan and Sind remained quiet. Afghanistan under Dost Mohammad remained friendly to the British who also received much needed help from Nepal.

Lack of Unity Among Indians

An even bigger cause of the failure was the appalling disunity among the Indians themselves. Almost half the Indian soldiers not only did not participate, but also fought against their own countrymen. The recapture of Delhi was effected by 1700 British troops and 3200 Indian troops.

While the sepoys in Bengal were revolting, those in Punjab and south India sided with the British in crushing the rebellion.

Lack of Support from Various Sections of People

The revolt did not receive the support of a vast section of Indian people including the Indian rulers, merchants, zamindars and educated intelligentsia.

There were various groups who chose to remain loyal to the British for their own reasons. The Sikhs, for example, feared the revival of the Mughals; the Rajput chiefs and the Nizam of Hyderabad feared the revival of the Marathas. The Bengal zamindars were a creation of the British. Big merchants and some sections of peasantry had also profited under the British. The taluqdars (big zamindars) of Awadh abandoned the revolt once the British reassured them that their estates would be returned.

Further, the revolt did not receive the support of educated Indian intelligentsia. The new educated middle classes were a product of the British system and they mistakenly believed that the British influence was needed to lead India to modernisation. They had little understanding of the evils of colonialism and could not foresee that the colonial rule was incapable of modernising India.

Then, just about 1 per cent of the Indian rulers joined the revolt. An overwhelming majority of Indian rulers actively supported the British in suppression of the revolt and included **the Scindias, the Holkars, the Nizam of Hyderabad, Nawab of Bhopal, the Maharaja of Kashmir and the Ranas of Nepal**. States of **Rampur, Patiala, Jind and Baroda** also remained loyal to the British. How valuable their role was for the British during the Revolt is evident from the following remarks of **Canning, the Governor General during the Revolt**- 'If Scindia joins the Mutiny, I shall have to pack off tomorrow.' About the role of the Indian chiefs, he had remarked, 'They acted as the **breakwaters to the storm** which would have otherwise swept us in one great wave.'

Lack of a Unified Programme and Ideology

All those elements who rebelled against the British had their own reasons for doing so—the Rani of Jhansi fought for her Jhansi, Nana Sahib for his Peshwaship. Khan Bahadur Khan fought for Rohilkhand, the Begum of Awadh for the rights of her minor son. The sepoys were driven into the vortex of the struggle owing to their specific professional and religious grievances. Thus, it is clear that the rebels were driven by their own narrow and selfish motives which totally sapped the movement of its very strength and vitality.

Lack of a Forward-Looking Plan

The rebels revolted against the British authority, but did not know what to create in its place. They relied on leaders such as Bahadur Shah and Nana Sahib who belonged to the old feudal system which had been defeated by the British. They could not see that the progress of the country lay not in going back to feudal monarchy but in going forward to modern society and polity.

Feelings of modern nationalism alone could have provided a viable alternative to the British rule, which were yet to emerge. The Hindus and the Muslims came together against a common enemy, but their differences were not yet dead. The soldiers from Bombay and Madras were mostly from lower castes and they remained loyal. Thus, we see that the rebels were united only in their hatred for the British but divided in their vision for future and had no common ideal before them.

Poor Leadership and Poor Organization of the Revolt

On one hand, old Bahadur Shah was proclaimed as leader of the Revolt whose weak personality, old age and lack of leadership qualities created political weakness at the nerve centre of the revolt. On the other hand, the Company's army was led by men of exceptional abilities and experience: like Nicholson, Outram, Havelock, Edwards and Lawrence brothers.

The revolt was also poorly organised and lacked a plan of action. After the suppression of the revolt, various commissions were appointed to find any plan or scheme of the rebellion, but there was found to be none. Though the rebels were not lacking in courage, they were certainly lacking in experience and organising ability.

Superiority of the British Resources

The British forces were decidedly superior to the rebel forces—the British had modern weapons of war while the Indians fought with spears and swords; the British were better organised while the rebels often behaved like a riotous mob. The British were empowered with a strong central command, a plan for military action and regular supply of men, money and material; while the rebels had no such support system. The strength of the British forces may be gauged from the fact that many rebels felt demoralised at the very sight of the British troops and fled back to their villages. Moreover, considering the vast resources of the British army, it may be safely stated that even if the English had been driven into the sea, it would have only been a matter of time before they had recaptured India.

In context of the use of modern weaponry by the British troops, Nana Saheb had remarked, 'The blue cap kills before they fire.'

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVOLT

The Revolt of 1857, an unsuccessful but heroic effort to eliminate the foreign rule, stands out as a **major milestone in Modern Indian History**. It represented the crystallisation of resentment against the alien rule. It was the desperate last effort to save India under traditional leadership, and the first great popular effort to rid India of the foreign rule. The Revolt of 1857 shattered the invincibility of the British rule and paved the way for the rise of modern national struggle.

In fact, the significance of the revolt was not limited to its immediate achievements; even in failure it served a great purpose. The revolt, along with all the previous uprisings, created a valuable tradition of resistance to British rule and the leaders of the revolt emerged as the earliest nationalist leaders who continued to inspire feelings of nationalism for all ages to come.

DEBATE REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE REVOLT OF 1857

The nature of the Revolt of 1857 has been much debated. Various historians describe it variously—as a mutiny, as a religious war against the Christians, or even as a racial struggle for supremacy. Still others describe it as a struggle between Oriental and Occidental civilisations and cultures, or as a Hindu-Muslim conspiracy to overthrow the British. Some Indian nationalists have also called it the 'First War of Indian Independence'.

Revolt of 1857: A Sepoy Mutiny or a National Struggle?

Was it a Sepoy Mutiny?

British historians such as Sir John Lawrence and Sir John Seeley tend to define the Revolt as nothing more than a sepoy mutiny. Their narration focuses more on the accounts of rebel sepoys and ignores the civil rebellion. There is a marked tendency to minimise the Indian grievances and overlook the colonial context in which the Revolt occurred. Some contemporary Indians also agreed with this view. These included **Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan** (Sadr Amin at Bijnor in 1857), Munshi Jiwan Lal and Moinuddin (eyewitnesses at Delhi), and Durgadas Bandopadhyaya (eyewitness at Bareilly).

Later, British historians such as **Judith Brown** have admitted this imperial bias and stated that 'Many British people preferred to see the events largely as a military mutiny, understandably, as any wider interpretation could have cast doubt on the nature of the Raj.'

Was it a National Struggle?

This view was first put forth in 1902 by **VD Savarkar** in his book *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*. By that time, nationalist agitations had emerged and the happenings of 1857 were viewed as part of that struggle. In this account, the focus now shifted from the sepoy mutiny to the colonial context.

However, the critics point out that the Revolt cannot be seen as a freedom struggle due to **absence of feelings of modern nationalism** in the rebels and lack of a common vision for future.

Other Opinions on the Nature of the Revolt of 1857

- **L. E. R. Rees:** The Revolt was 'a war of fanatic religionists against Christians'.
- **T. R. Holmes:** The Revolt was 'a conflict between civilisation and barbarism'.
- **Sir James Outram and W. Tyler:** The outbreak was 'a result of Hindu-Muslim conspiracy'.
- **Benjamin Disraeli (Former British Prime Minister, then a contemporary leader in England):** It was a 'national rising'.
- **Marxist Interpretation:** It was 'the struggle of the soldier peasant democratic combine against foreign as well as feudal bondage'.
- **Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru:** Essentially it was 'a feudal outburst headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by the widespread anti-foreign sentiment'.
- **S. N. Sen:** 'What began as a fight for religion, ended as a war of independence'.
- **Anonymous:** '1857 was not the inauguration of a freedom movement but the dying groans of an absolute aristocracy'.

Recent scholarly researches support the view that while it began as a military mutiny, the uprising quickly assumed the character of a popular rebellion. Whatever may be the nature of the Revolt, it did become a symbol of struggle against the British rule and during the freedom struggle our people drew inspiration from the heroic stories of 1857.

Revolt of 1857: Planned or Spontaneous?

It seems that there was some kind of organised plan but it did not mature sufficiently once the revolt broke out. It is believed that **red lotuses** and **chappatis** were used as symbols of freedom. Roaming sanyasis and fakirs delivered speeches and mobilised anti-colonial elements. All this helped in stirring up the rebellion.



VD Savarkar, author of *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*.

CONSEQUENCES OR IMPACT OF THE REVOLT OF 1857

Even though the Revolt of 1857 was suppressed and British authority re-established, the revolt gave a severe jolt to the British government. It emerged as a milestone event, an eye-opener, full of lessons and warnings for the Raj.

The structure and policies of the re-established British Raj were, in many respects, drastically changed and inaugurated a new era of colonialism in India. Mid-19th century had witnessed the spread of Industrial Revolution in other countries. Countries of Europe, USA and Japan underwent industrialisation. With this began the race for new markets and colonies. Consequently, Britain began vigorous efforts to save its existing empire.

Thus, the changes introduced in the post-revolt years were guided by a **renewed imperialist ideology** evident in the reactionary policies of Viceroys such as Lytton, Dufferin and Curzon. The feudal and vested interests were protected, policy of divide and rule was more vigorously pursued and European control over key positions was tightened.

Change of Power

After the Revolt of 1857, the British government was forced to pass the Government of India Act of 1858 which called for the liquidation of British East India Company. The Bill for the transfer of control of Government of India from the East India Company to the Crown was first introduced by Lord Palmerston, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. However, Palmerston had to resign on another issue even before the Bill could be passed. Later, Edward Henry Stanley (who became the first Secretary of State for India) introduced another bill originally titled as 'An Act for the Better Government of India', and it was passed on **2 August 1858**.

The Government of India Act of 1858 introduced the following changes-

- The Act of 1858 abolished the East India Company and ended its rule in India. Power to govern India was transferred from the East India **Company to the British Crown**.
- The Governor General was now to be called as **Viceroy** or Crown's representative.
- The Court of Directors and the Board of Control were abolished and transferred to the **Principal Secretary of State for India** and **India Council** (also called Advisory Council-a 15 member Council to aid and advice the Secretary of State). They were to govern India in the name of the Crown. This Secretary of State was a member of the British Cabinet and as such responsible to the Parliament. He was required to submit a periodic report on the moral and material progress of India.

The Act ushered in a new era in Indian history, bringing an end to the Company's rule in India. At the same time, this change of power was more 'formal' than 'substantial'. It was intended that the change of name will immediately condone the past and give a fresh starting point to the empire. The Act did not change anything in India, and only brought about some cosmetic changes in England. Ever since the Act of 1784, the Crown had exercised considerable influence over India affairs through the Board of Control. Now it was to do this directly. Further, no new policy was inaugurated by the Act.

A few months later, the Act was followed by Queen Victoria's proclamation. The royal proclamation was announced on **1 November 1858** at a grand Darbar held at **Allahabad**. The document is also known as the 'Magna Carta of the people of India' and it declared the future policy of the British rule in India.

The Queens' Proclamation of 1858 said, among other things:

1. We have taken upon ourselves the said government.
2. We appoint Viscount Canning, to be our first Viceroy and Governor General in India...to act on our behalf subject to... orders received through one of our Principal Secretaries of State.
3. We announce to the native Princes of India that all treaties made with them by the Company will be accepted...
4. We desire no extension of our territorial possessions...
5. We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of native Princes as our own.
6. We disclaim alike the desire to impose our convictions (religious) on any of our subjects.
7. It is our further will that ... our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our service...
8. We will that generally, in framing the law, due regard be paid to the ancient rights and customs of India.
9. It is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility, and to administer the government for the benefit of all subjects resident therein.
10. Our clemency will be extended to all offenders except those who have been convicted... or directly taken part in murder of British subjects.

Changes in Military Policy

The Indian Army had been chiefly responsible for the crisis of 1857 and it was thoroughly reorganised. Measures were taken to prevent future revolts-

- The number of **European soldiers was increased**. In the Bengal army, ratio was fixed at one European soldier for two Indian soldiers (1:2). In Bombay and Madras armies, ratio was fixed at 1:3 or 2:5.
- European troops were strategically placed at key areas; all big positions in army and artillery were reserved for Europeans.
- European troops were given exclusive charge of critical branches like artillery.
- Soldiers from Awadh, Bihar and Central India were declared as **non-martial** while Punjabis, Gorkhas and Pathans (who had fought for the British) were declared as martial and recruited in large numbers. By 1875, half of the British Indian army was recruited from Punjab.
- Indian troops were organised on the policy of '**divide and rule**' or '**balance and counterpoise**'. Regiments were formed along the lines of caste, community and region to prevent development of feelings of solidarity and nationalism.

In 1861, **Charles Wood**, Secretary of State for India, communicated to Canning, 'If one regiment mutinies, I should like to have the next regiment so alien that it would be ready to fire into it.'

The British section of the Indian army served as an army of occupation and became the ultimate guarantee of Britain's hold over India. The British Indian army was also used to further the cause of British imperialism in Asia and Africa.

Change in Policy Towards the Upper Classes (Princes and Landlords)

- **Policy of annexations abandoned:** Prior to the Revolt, the British took up every opportunity to annex the Princely states. Yet, no more than 1 per cent of the Indian princes participated in the Revolt. They largely remained loyal to the British and actively participated in suppression of the Revolt. Viceroy Canning later declared that they had acted as '**breakwaters in the storm**'.

Realising their utility as significant allies, the British abandoned the policy of annexations. The Queen declared in her proclamation of 1858 that there shall be no more annexations, the states will be allowed to adopt their heirs. **Canning abandoned the Doctrine of Lapse** (that had aggrieved Rani of Jhansi, Nana Sahib and Begum Hazrat Mahal). The princes, zamindars and landlords were now to be utilised as counterweights against the nationalists.

- **Princes and landlords rewarded and befriended:** Villages were restored to taluqdars, subject to loyalty and transmission of information. The princes who had remained loyal to the British during the Revolt were rewarded (these included **Gwalior, Rampur, Patiala and Jind**). They were organised into a Board of privileged dependents. In 1861, a special order of knighthood 'the star of India' was instituted and its recipients were the rulers of **Bhopal, Baroda, Gwalior, Patiala and Rampur**.
- **Britain as paramount power:** At the same time, as a price, the Indian States were made to acknowledge Britain as the paramount power (Prior to 1857, at least in theory, the princely states were considered subsidiary but sovereign). In 1876, Queen Victoria assumed the title of '**the Empress of India**'. Curzon also declared that the princely states were mere agents of the British Crown.

Thus, the British now aimed to befriend the strongest elements of Indian society, i.e. the princes and the landlords to consolidate their position.

Change in Attitude Towards Educated Indians

Hostility Towards Higher Education

Even though the educated Indians did not participate in the Revolt, some of them had begun to understand the real nature of the colonial rule. The British now became **hostile to higher education** in India and even took active steps to curtail it after the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885.

Indian Civil Service Act of 1861

One of the assurances contained in the Queen's Proclamation stated-'our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to office in our service...'. In order to give

expression to this pledge the Indian Civil Service Act of 1861 was passed, which provided for an annual competitive exam to be held in London. However, the detailed rules framed were such that they had the effect of keeping the civil services a close preserve of the Englishmen.

Indian Councils Act of 1861

The British realised that a major cause for the Revolt was the miscommunication between the ruler and the ruled. Sir Bartle Frère, in his famous Minute of 1860, pushed for the representation of Indians in the Legislative Councils. It was felt that the association of Indians in legislation would familiarise the rulers with popular sentiments and avoid future misunderstandings. In this way, the Act of 1861 marked a humble beginning towards representative institutions in India.

Change in Policy Towards the Common Masses

Socio-religious Reforms

The Queen's proclamation declared that, 'We disclaim alike the desire to impose our convictions (religious) on any of our subjects.' Social and religious institutions were an area in which the British intervened with great caution. Yet, even this policy of limited social intervention was abandoned by the colonial government after the Revolt of 1857. It was now openly put forward that there were many social and cultural defects in Indian society which made Indian unfit to rule themselves! Hence, they must be governed by the British for an indefinite period of time!

According to Percival Spear, 'The Indian Government's honeymoon with progress was over.'

Divide and Rule

Further, to prevent feelings of unity and nationhood among civilian population, the policy of divide and rule was introduced even among the masses. The unity showed by Hindus and Muslims during the revolt disturbed the colonial rulers and they got determined to break this unity.

Immediately after the revolt, the Muslims were repressed (Since Bahadur Shah II was appealed to head the revolt, the British believed the Revolt to be a Muslim conspiracy). Later, this policy was reversed and policy of appeasement of Muslims was introduced which sowed the seeds of communalism in India and disrupted the national movement.

Racial Discrimination

Racial bitterness emerged as the worst legacy of the crisis. The British had always stayed aloof from Indians but the Revolt of 1857 widened this racial divide. The British began to assert vigorously the doctrine of racial supremacy to assert their authority and humiliate the Indians. The notices of 'Europeans only' came up across railway coaches, parks, restaurants, etc. In The Punch, a British weekly magazine of humour and satire, the Indian was cartooned as half gorilla-half negro who could be controlled only by a superior race, and henceforth, the British rule was justified by the philosophy of 'Whiteman's burden'-the burden of civilising the non-whites.

In this way, the Revolt of 1857 marked the beginning of a new phase of British rule in India. For the British, the dangers from the feudal India ended and a new challenge emerged in the form of the English educated middle class.

OPINIONS OF VARIOUS HISTORIANS

- **Tara Chand:** 'Revolt of 1857 was the last attempt of an effete order to recover its departed glory.'
- **S. B. Chaudhuri:** 'First War of Independence it certainly was, as in the whole canvas of recorded history of India it would be difficult to find a parallel to this gigantic anti-foreign combine of all classes of people and of many provinces of India. There was never a war in India lasting continuously for more than a year and simultaneously in all the regions which had for its objective the ejection of the alien ruling power.' (Theories of the Indian Mutiny).
- **R. C. Majumdar:** 'Apart from individual cases here and there, no evidence has yet been brought to light which would support the view that the patriotic motive of freeing the country formed the chief incentive to the general outbreak of the people...It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the so-called First National War of independence of 1857 is neither First, nor National, nor War of Independence.' (British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, p. 624)
- **S. N. Sen:** 'The mutiny was inevitable...No dependent nation can forever reconcile itself to foreign domination. A despotic government must ultimately rule by the sword though it might be sheathed in velvet. In India, the sword was apparently in the custody of the sepoy army. Between the sepoy and his foreign masters, there was no common tie of race, language and religion...the Mutiny was inherent in the constitution of the empire.'
- **Eric Stokes:** '1857 stands firmly in a historical continuum...Like 1848 in Europe-despite obvious disparities-it was an uprising sans issue that could catch a society moving into the early stages of modernization.' (The Peasant and the Raj, p. 39)



Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- The educated middle class in India:
[UPSC 1998]
(a) Opposed the Revolt of 1857
(b) Supported the Revolt of 1857
(c) Remained neutral to the Revolt of 1857
(d) Fought against native rulers
- 'In this instance, we could not play of the Mohammedans against the Hindus'. To which of the following events did this remark of Aitchison relate? [UPSC 2000]
(a) Revolt of 1857
(b) Champaran Satyagraha (1917)
(c) Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement (1919-22)
(d) August Movement of 1942

3. Which one of the following places did Kunwar Singh, a prominent leader of the Revolt of 1857, belong to? [UPSC 2005]

(a) Bihar
(b) Madhya Pradesh
(c) Rajasthan
(d) Uttar Pradesh

4. Which one of the following territories was not affected by the Revolt of 1857?

[UPSC 2005]

(a) Jhansi (b) Chittor
(c) Jagdishpur (d) Lucknow

5. With reference to the Revolt of the Year 1857, who among the following was betrayed by a friend; captured and put to death by the British? [UPSC 2006]

(a) Nana Sahib
(b) Kunwar Singh

(c) Khan Bahadur Khan
(d) Taty Tope

6. Who was the Governor General of India during the sepoy mutiny? [UPSC 2006]

(a) Lord Canning (b) Lord Dalhousie
(c) Lord Hardinge (d) Lord Lytton

7. What was/were the object/objects of Queen Victoria's proclamation (1858)?

[UPSC 2014]

1. To disclaim any intention to annex the Indian states.
2. To place the Indian administration under the British crown
3. To regulate East India Company's trade with India.

Select the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3



Previous Years' Questions – Main Exam

1. 'What began as a fight for religion ended as a war of independence, for there is not the slightest doubt that the rebels wanted to get rid of the alien government and restore the old order of which the king of Delhi was the rightful representative.' Do you support this viewpoint? [UPSC 1999]

2. What administrative changes were introduced in India after 1858? What were the objectives of these changes?

[UPSC 2001]

3. Examine the policy of Subordinated Union towards Princely states. Account for the shift from the policy of Subordinate Isolation. [UPSC 2005]

4. What are the salient features of Government of India Act of 1858? [UPSC 2007]

5. Explain how the uprising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India. [UPSC 2016]



Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. The educated Indians did not participate in the Revolt of 1857 because-

(a) They knew that India was militarily weak

(b) They believed that the British influence was needed to lead India to modernisation.

(c) They believed that Indians needed a master race to rule them.

(d) None of the above

2. Which of the following was/were the reasons for the failure of the Revolt of 1857?

1. The rebels did not have any concerted plan of action.
2. The military superiority of the British.
3. The rebels lacked a vision for future society.

Select the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2
(c) 1 and 3 (d) All of the above

3. Which of the below is incorrectly matched?

(a) Awadh-Begum Hazrat Mahal
(b) Delhi-Bakht Khan
(c) Faizabad-Kunwar Singh
(d) Bareilly-Khan Bahadur

4. Who among the following remained loyal to the British during the Revolt of 1857?

1. Nawab of Bhopal
2. Holkars of Indore
3. Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur

Select the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Which of the following events boosted the morale of Indian sepoys during the Revolt of 1857?

1. The Punjab Wars
2. Defeat of Russia by Japan
3. The Crimean War
4. Defeat of the Italian army by the Ethiopians

Select the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 4 (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Which of the following contributed in the failure of the Revolt of 1857?

1. Holkars and Scindias supported the British.

2. The revolt was backward looking.

3. India south of the Narmada remained largely unaffected.

Select the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

7. Which of the following were the causes of discontent among the sepoys that contributed to the Revolt of 1857?

1. They were no longer gifted with jagirs for their meritorious deeds.
2. They were forced to serve in far away regions without payment of any extra batta (allowance).
3. They were forced to eat pig and cow fat when serving overseas.
4. Their free-postage privilege was withdrawn.

Select the correct answer using from the following options.

(a) 2 only (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1, 2 and 4 (d) All of the above

8. Consider the following statements with regard to changes in the military policy after 1857.

1. European troops were strategically placed at key areas.
2. Punjabis, Gorkhas and Pathans were declared as martial.
3. Regiments were formed on the basis of equality to prevent accumulation of grievances.

Which of the above statements is/are true?

Select the correct answer from the following options.

(a) 1 (b) 1 and 2
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

9. Which of the following was not a cause of the Revolt of 1857?

(a) Humiliation of the Indian sepoys.

- (b) Grievances of the educated Indians.
 (c) Various land revenue settlements introduced by the British.
 (d) Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse.
10. _____ were the princely states that remained loyal to the British during the Revolt of 1857.
 (a) Bhopal, Baroda, Gwalior, Rampur
 (b) Bhopal, Baroda, Gwalior, Awadh
 (c) Jhansi, Baroda, Gwalior, Rampur
 (d) Baroda, Gwalior, Rampur, Arrah
11. Jhansi was recaptured under the leadership of British officer _____.
 (a) John Nicholson
 (b) Sir Campbell
 (c) Hugh Rose
 (d) None of the above
12. Which of the following is incorrectly matched?
 (a) Lucknow-Begum of Awadh
 (b) Arrah-Kunwar Singh
 (c) Bihar-Maulvi Ahmadullah
 (d) Bareilly-Khan Bahadur Khan
13. Which of the following princely states did not help the British in suppression of the Revolt?

- (a) Bhopal
 (b) Nepal
 (c) Kashmir
 (d) None of the above
14. 1. Indian troops were organised on the policy of 'balance and counterpoise'.
 2. In the Bombay army, ratio was fixed at one European soldier for two Indian soldiers.
 Which of the above statements are correct with regard to the changes introduced post-1857?
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) both (d) neither
15. 1. A general amnesty was granted to all the rebels of 1857 revolt.
 2. The British gave up the policy of annexation and the Doctrine of Lapse was abandoned.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct with regard to the Queen's proclamation of 1858?
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) both (d) neither



Practice Questions – Main Exam

- What were the grievances of the people on the eve of the Revolt of 1857? To what extent were they responsible for the Revolt? Discuss.
- 'The Religion became a rallying cry of the Revolt'. Critically analyse.
- Comment on the nature of the Revolt of 1857.
- Comment on the changes introduced in British policy after the Revolt of 1857.

- What were the objectives behind these changes?
- What was the contribution of Dalhousie in hastening the events of 1857?
 - What were the causes for the failure of the Revolt of 1857? Write your answer with special reference to the role played by the educated middle class.
 - The Revolt of 1857 was a milestone in Indian National Movement. Evaluate.

Answers

Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (a) | 3. (a) | 4. (b) | 5. (d) |
| 6. (a) | 7. (a) | | | |

Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (d) | 3. (c) | 4. (b) | 5. (b) |
| 6. (d) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) | 9. (b) | 10. (a) |
| 11. (c) | 12. (c) | 13. (d) | 14. (a) | 15. (b) |