

The Great Revolt of 1857

I. Causes

(i) Military
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Uses of cartridges made from cow and pig fat (rumored) in new <i>Enfield</i> rifle replaced the older <i>Brown Bess</i>. This use of fat was respectively offensive to the Hindus and Muslims – Overseas deployment, which was against the belief of Hindus in not crossing the seas – Differences in salaries for equal ranks (Refusal to pay Batta (allowance) to Indian soldiers). Special provisions for European soldiers – Religious identities seemed to be in crisis, under the threat of conversion – Regular humiliation at the hands of British officers
(ii) Political cause
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Doctrine of Lapse (by Lord Dalhousie) – states under this revolted Nana Sahib was refused pension, as he was the adopted son of Peshwa BajiRao II. Awadh was annexed in 1856, on charges of mal-administration. Satara, Jhansi, Nagpur and Sambhalpur were annexed owing to Doctrine of lapse
(iii) Economic causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High rate of taxation – Discriminatory tariff policy against Indian products and destruction of traditional handicrafts resulted into deindustrialization which resulted in unemployment
(iv) Socio- Religious causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some reforms like Anti Sati Resolution (1829), Widow Remarriage Act (1856) were unpopular among orthodox Hindus. – Racial discrimination by British against Indians, Forceful conversion to Christianity

Muslim Elite [Ashraf in Persian]

- Before British, they held top position in Army, Civil services, Judiciary.
- Persian being replaced by English as official language affected them a lot.
- Some Muslim elite joined the revolt thinking they could re-establish the old system.

Mangal Pandey

- was a sepoy in 34th Bengal Native Infantry regiment of E.I.C.
- known for his involvement in the initial stages of revolt of 1857.
- originally from Awadh.
- 1st person to revolt, at Barrackpore.

Sepoy Mutiny or First War of Indian Independence?

- ✚ Not just a Sepoy Mutiny -it was not just confined to the sepoys or soldiers, but was much broader in base. The civilian population, aristocracy, peasants, religious leaders etc played active role in the revolt.
- ✚ Not completely the First War of Independence – India was merely a geographical term then, leaders fought for their own personal reasons to get back what they had lost; there was no broad vision of a unified India. Therefore, the exact nature of the revolt was somewhat between these extreme views.

II. Important centres and their leaders

Centre	Indian Leader(s)
Delhi	Bahadur Shah II 'Zafar' and Bakht Khan
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan
Kanpur	1. Nana Saheb [adopted son of BajiRao II] 2. Tantia Tope [accountant of Nana Saheb] 3. AzeemUllah Khan
Lucknow	Begum HazratMahal, mother of BirjisQadar
Jhansi	Rani LaxmiBai
Faizabad	Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah (Leader of Wahabi movement)
Allahabad	Liyaqat Ali
Jagdishpur (Bihar)	Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh
Patna	MaulviPir Ali (leader of Wahabi movement)

Sepoy Mutiny (May 10, 1857)

- Bloody uprising at the garrison in Meerut
- Sepoys marched to Delhi and “placed themselves under the leadership” of the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah.
- The bewildered Emperor reluctantly accepted the sepoy’s allegiance and agreed to give his countenance to the rebellion.
- The Mughal Emperor announced Bakht Khan as commander-in-chief.

Wahabi Movement

- The most serious and well-planned challenge to British supremacy in India from 1830's to 1860's
- Led by Syed Ahmed of Rae Bareilly
- Influenced by the teachings of Abdul Wahab and Shah Waliullah
- Actively supported the revolt of 1857
- Gave the slogan of 'Jihad'.
- declared India as 'dar-ul-harb' meaning land of infidels – to be converted to “dar-ul-Islam” meaning land of peace.

III. Reasons for Failure of the Revolt

- ✚ British forces were better equipped with technology and equipment as compared to the revolutionaries. It had some brilliant officers which played key role in suppressing the revolt.
- ✚ The revolt didn't spread to entire country. South India remained quiet and Punjab and Bengal were only marginally affected.
- ✚ There was **no vision** for the post mutiny institutions and the leaders didn't have any forward looking program.
- ✚ Lack of **complete nationalism**-Scindias, Holkars, Nizam and others actively helped the British.

- ✚ Lack of **coordination** between sepoys, peasants, zamindars and other classes.

IV. Outcomes

- ✚ The Government of India Act 1858.
- ✚ Secretary of State of India appointed with a council of 15 members to assist him.
- ✚ Viceroy to be appointed.

- ✓ Viceroy – Representative of British Crown
- ✓ Governor General – Head of Government of India

1st Secretary of State – Charter Wood
 1st Governor General – Lord Warren Hastings
 1st Governor General of India – Lord William Bentinck
 Last Governor General of India –
 C Rajagopalachari
 1st Viceroy & Governor General – Lord Canning

The Govt. of India Act 1858

- Company's territories in India were to be vested in the Queen and be governed by her.
- The Queen's Secretary of State received the power and duties of the company's Court of Directors.
- The Crown was empowered to appoint a governor general & governor of presidencies.
- Provision created for Indian Civil Services under the S.O.S
- All property of E.L.C were transferred to the Crown

Queen's Proclamation

Queen Victoria Proclaimed

- No state would be annexed.
- No more intervention in religious matters.
- No conversion in religion by force.
- No discrimination in recruitment of Army Services.

Measures Adopted by British After 1857

- ✚ Appease certain sections of Indian Society – 'divide and rule' policy
- ✚ Strategically change the army
 - ✓ The proportion of Europeans to Indians in the army was raised and fixed at one to two in the Bengal army and two to five in the Madras and Bombay armies
 - ✓ All sensitive posts were only for the Europeans
 - ✓ Caste based battalions were raised
- ✚ The British government decided not to interfere in the matter of religion of Indians. This derailed the socio-religious reforms by government

Important Books on the Revolt of 1857

Book	Author
The First Indian War of Independence-1857-59	Karl Marx
Rebellion, 1857 : A Symposium	P.C. Joshi
The Sepoy Mutiny & the rebellion of 1857	R.C. Mazumdar
1857	S.N. Sen
Causes of Indian Revolt	Saiyed Ahmad Khan
The First War of Indian Independence	V.D. Savarkar