

GS Foundation 2024: Modern India

Handout 18: 1857

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Causes

1. The colonial character of the British rule was the fundamental factor responsible for the revolt of 1857.
2. The revolt represented the discontentment of different social groups of India which had been seething since the previous century since the establishment of British rule which had adversely affected every section of Indian population.
 - a. Many **native rulers** were removed by the British, and their territories were annexed.
 - (a) Interference of Residents
 - (b) Doctrine of Lapse of Dalhousie
 - (c) Practice of granting pensions was discontinued (eg Rani Jindan, Nana Sahib, Lakshmi Bai etc.)
 - (d) Annexation of Awadh
 - b. **Old elites and intermediaries** were displaced. They lost both power and prestige.
 - (a) Replacement of Persian by English (affects Ashrafs adversely)
 - (b) Bentinck attempted to take revenue-free grants from zamindars, and later Governor-Generals continued with this policy.
 - (c) The revenue commissioner of Awadh, Coverly Jackson, disposed Taluqdars.
 - c. The **peasants** suffered immensely because of the impact of land revenue settlement.
 - d. The British trade policy ruined Indian handicraft industry. Thus, **artisans and craftsmen** became jobless.
 - e. **Soldiers** also suffered because they were discriminated against.
 - (a) Military law was based on racism. An Indian soldiers could rise only upto the post of subedar having money salary of Rs. 50. (low salary, bleak prospects of promotion)
 - (b) Withdrawal of the allowances (Bhatta) after the conquest and annexation of a province and ironically post the same troops in those very same provinces on reduced salaries.
 - (c) Military recruitment favoured **higher caste Hindus**. This led to growing caste sensibility among Indian soldiers. Thus, the question of compulsory overseas service (**General Service Enlistment Act, 1856** – Burma and Afghanistan) became sensitive.

- (d) Moreover, being a part of Indian **peasantry**, Indian soldiers also suffered the consequences of the effects of the British rule on countryside.
- f. The discontent produced by this suffering came out **collectively** in the form of the great of 1857.
3. **Bruised socio-cultural and religious sensibilities** due to constant British interference.
- After 1813, many **Christian missionaries** were given permission to propagate their religion in India. Their **propaganda** was often very insensitive towards the feelings of Hindus as well as Muslims.
 - Moreover, the government took decision to tax temple and mosque lands which were granted tax free by local rulers. (**Iman Commission 1852** led to annexation of thousands of Jagirs).
 - Aggressive social reform** – Ban on Sati and Encouragement of widow remarriage. It was seen as interference in social, cultural and religious affairs of Hindus by a largely conservative society.
 - The passing of **Religious Disabilities Act in 1850** which entitled sons to retain their property rights even after conversion, thus modified Hindu customs.
 - The rumours of **mixing bone dust in flour** used in military cantonments further fueled the suspicion against British.
 - The **issue of greased cartridges** provided immediate spark. This incident triggered the revolt, that's why it is commented that in the immediate sense, revolt began as a battle to safeguard religion.



Factsheet – Sepoy mutinies before 1857

- 1764 – A military contingent revolted against Munroe in Buxar.
- 1766 – Sepoys mutinied against Clive.
- 1806 – Sepoy mutiny of Vellore. Tipu's sons played an important role in instigating this revolt. The British had interfered in some social and religious practices.
- 1824 – 47th Infantry refused to go to Burma on the issue of 'Bhatta' - a charges for fighting oversea wars.
- 1825 – Sepoys of Artillery division of Assam revolted.
- 1838 – Sholapur mutiny, on the issue of 'Bhatta'
- 1844 – 64th regiment refused to go to Sindh.
- 1849-50 – At Govindgarh Sepoys revolted.

Timeline of the Revolt

Time	Event/Reason
1856	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annexation of Awadh ; <u>Nawab Wajid Ali Shah</u> is deposed ● Summary Settlement introduced (includes Awadh and North-Western provinces) ● Religious Disabilities Act-1850 ● Post Office Act-1854 ● Death of prince <u>Faqiruddin</u> ● General Services Enlistment Act
1857	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10th May - <u>Mutiny in Meerut</u> ● 11-12 May - Revolt in Delhi; <u>Bahadur Shah II</u> declared the emperor of Hindustan ● 20 - 27 May - <u>Sepoys rise up</u> against British officers in Aligarh, Mainpuri, Etawah, Etah ● 30 May - Lucknow added to <u>the revolt</u> centres ● May - June - Revolt Spreads to larger region; includes <u>civilian population</u> ● June - Sir Hugh Wheeler surrendered to <u>Nana Saheb and</u> he was expelled from Kanpur ● 30 June - British lose in the Battle of <u>Chinhat (outside Lucknow)</u> ● July - <u>Shahmal</u> killed by British forces ● June - <u>Sept - Siege</u> of Delhi by British forces ● 25th Sept - British Forces enter the Lucknow Residency under leadership of Henry Havelock and <u>Sir James Outram</u> ; Later <u>Sir Colin Campbell</u> arrived with reinforcements ● 1st November - 'Queens Proclamation' announced by Lord Canning at a Durbar in Allahabad, thus abolishing the Company rule ● Dec - Kanpur captured by Sir Colin Campbell
1858	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● March - Lucknow captured; Begum <u>Hazrat Mahal</u> escaped to Nepal ● May- June - <u>Rani Laxmibai</u> captured Gwalior fort ● June - <u>Rani Laxmibai</u> died on the battlefield; Maulavi Ahmadullah killed in <u>encounter</u>

Various leaders associated with the Revolt

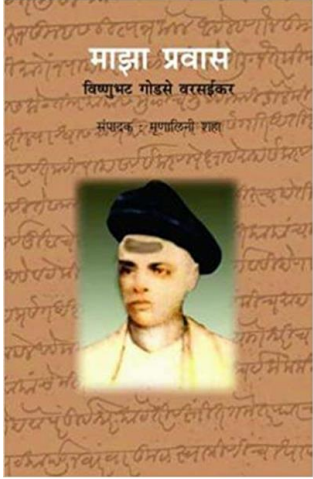
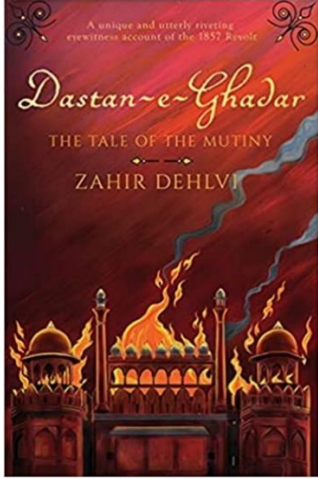
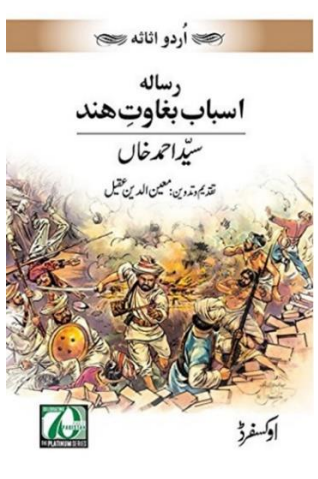
Barrackpore	<u>Mangal Pandey</u>
Delhi	<u>Bahadur Shah II, General Bakht Khan</u>
Delhi	Hakim Ashanullah (chief advisor to Bahadur Shah II)
Lucknow	Begum <u>Hazrat Mahal</u> , Birjis Qadir, <u>Ahmadullah</u> (advisor to the ex-Nawab of Awadh)
Kanpur	<u>Nana Saheb, Rao Saheb (nephew of Nana), Tantia Tope, Azimullah Khan</u> (advisor of Nana Saheb)
Jhansi	Rani <u>Laxmi Bai</u>
Bihar Jagdishpur	<u>Kunwar Singh, Amar Singh</u>
Allahabadh and Benares	<u>Maulvi Liyakat Ali in the famous Khusro Bagh of Allahabad</u>
Faizabad	Maulvi

Farrukhabad	<u>Tufzal Hasan Khan.</u>
Bijnor	<u>Mahammad Khan</u>
Moradabad	Abdul Ali Khan
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan
Mandsaur	Firoz Shah
Gwalior/Kanpur	Tantia Tope
Assam	Kandapareshwar Singh, Manirama Dutta
Orissa	Surendra Shahi, Ujjwal Shahi
Kullu	Raja Pratap Singh
Rajasthan	Jai Dayal Singh and Har Dayal Singh
Gorakhpur	Gajadhar Singh
Mathura	Sevi Singh, Kadam Singh
Sambalpur	Veer Surendra Sai

British Officers associated with the Revolt

General John Nicholson	Captured Delhi on 20 th September 1857 (Nicholson died soon due to a <u>mortal wound</u> received during the fighting)
Major Hudson	Killed <u>Bahadur Shah's</u> sons and grandsons in Delhi.
Sir Hugh Wheeler	Defence against Nana Sahib's forces till 26 th June 1857. British forces surrendered on 27 th on the promised of safe conduct to Allahabad.
General Neil	Recaptured <u>Benares and Allahabad</u> in June 1857. At <u>Kanpur</u> he killed Indians as revenge against the killing of English by Nana <u>Sahib's forces</u> Died at Lucknow while fighting against the rebels.
Sir Colin Campbell	Final recovery of Kanpur on 6 th Dec 1857. Final reoccupation of Lucknow on 21 st March 1858. Recapture of Bareilly on 5 th May 1858.
Henry Lawrence	Chief Commissioner of <u>Awadh</u> who died during the seizure of British Residency by <u>rebels at Lucknow</u> on 2 nd July 1857.
Major General Havelock	Defeated the rebels (Nana Sahib's force) on 17 th July. Died at Lucknow in December 1857
William Taylor	Suppressed the revolt at Arrah in August 1857.
Hugh Rose	Suppressed the revolt at <u>Jhansi</u> and recaptured <u>Gwalior</u> on 20 th June 1858. The whole of central India and <u>Bundelkhand</u> was brought under British control by him.
Colonel Ocell	Captured Benares.

Nature and Character of the 1857

 <p>माझा प्रवास विष्णुभट गोडसे वरमईकर संपादक - मुमताजिनी शहा</p> <p><u>Vishnubhat Godse (1827-1904)</u></p>	 <p>A unique and utterly riveting eyewitness account of the 1857 Revolt</p> <p>Dastan-e-Ghadar THE TALE OF THE MUTINY ZAHIR DEHLVI</p> <p><u>Zahir Dehlvi (1835-1911)</u></p>	 <p>اُردو اُتانه رساله اسباب بغاوت ہند سید احمد خاں تقریباً ۱۸۵۷ء میں لکھی گئی</p> <p><u>Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98)</u></p>
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The Echo of the enormity of the 1857 reached London. The EIC was worried about its own future. Thus, it tried to undermine the enormity and gave it an undertone:

	<u>British Official Version</u>	<u>Indian Counter</u>
Sepoy Mutiny	<p>It was only a <u>mutiny</u> of <u>disgruntled</u> <u>sepoys</u>.</p> <p><i>Wholly unpatriotic and selfish <u>sepoy</u> <u>mutiny</u> with no native leadership and no <u>popular</u> support – Sir John Seeley</i></p>	<p>It was <u>not</u> a <u>Sepoy Mutiny</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the leaders had no military background (eg <u>Nanasaheb</u>, <u>Laxmibai</u>, <u>Kunwar Singh</u>) It enjoyed the support of thousands of civilians. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Not only</u> <u>sepoys</u> but also some <u>nobles</u>, <u>kings</u>, <u>nawabs</u>, <u>tribals</u>, <u>artisans</u> and <u>pesants</u> participated. In one <u>sense</u>, even <u>sepoys</u> were <u>peasants</u> in uniforms.
Muslim Conspiracy or Religious conspiracy	<p>To <u>delegitimize</u> the revolt, British termed it as a <u>conspiracy of Wahabis</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>It was a war of fanatic religionists against Christians - L.E.R. Rees</i> A <u>conflict</u> <u>between</u> <u>civilization</u> and <u>barbarism</u> – <u>TR Holmes</u> 	<p>It is not fair to call it a Muslim conspiracy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It <u>involved</u> many <u>Hindus</u> as well. Many influential regional leaders like <u>Laxmibai</u>, <u>Nana Saheb</u>, <u>Tatya Tope</u>, <u>Veer Kunwar Singh</u>, <u>Surendra Sai</u> were <u>all</u> <u>Hindus</u>. If symbolically, the <u>Mughal emperor</u> was <u>given</u> the status of the <u>emperor</u>, it was not because of his being <u>Muslim</u> but <u>he</u> was a symbol of <u>unity</u> of India also. There was Hindu-Muslim <u>unity</u> during the <u>Revolt</u>.

1. It was **anticolonial** because the exploitation caused by British Rule was the fundamental reason behind the revolt of 1857.
2. It was not an isolated phenomenon. It was a **continuation** of the tradition of peasants and Tribal revolts. This, it was **not the first** revolt against British rule, but it was **first of its kind**.
3. The revolt was **unplanned** in nature.
4. Revolt was **violent** in nature.

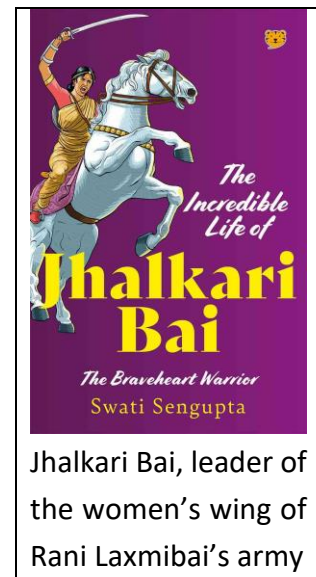
5. **Was it a war of national independence?**

- a. It cannot be denied that it was a war Independence in local/regional sense. Every rebel wanted to expel the British from their areas.
- b. Based on **numerical strength**, the revolt of 1857 went ahead of the combined numerical strength of American and French revolution combined.
- c. Based on **geographical reach**, it spread not only in north and central India but also in Poona and Kolhapur in Maharashtra and some areas in Karnataka region and Malabar Coast.
- d. Even based on **social participation**, it can be characterized as national. Revolt began as a sepoy mutiny but at many places it assumed the character of a mass rebellion. Peasants, artisans, craftsmen and other sections of common population participates in large number.
- e. Based on the interests/objectives, it is true that different sections had different interests. One should understand that once **sectional interests converge at a single point**, then it automatically becomes a national interest.
- f. Based on the **concept of Nation**, the idea of a modern pan-Indian nationalism was absent among the rebels.
The vision of India was more regional and not modern.

6. Revolt was **backward looking** because rebels wanted to turn the clock to pre-British period. They wanted to get rid of British alien government and **restore the old order** of which Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Jafar was the rightful representative.

7. **The revolt failed to achieve its objective**. The rebels could not turn clock back to pre-British period, but it was not complete failure.

- a. At one time it appeared as if the British Rule would come to an end. But the rebels were finally suppressed by British. **However**, inspite of its suppression, the revolt shook the foundation of the British Rule and forced them to initiate many changed in politico-admin, socio-cultural, economic and military policy.



Jhalkari Bai, leader of the women's wing of Rani Laxmibai's army

Why did the Revolt fail?

The uprising of 1857 began with immense enthusiasm, creating an initial impression that the rebels might successfully overthrow British rule. However, over time, the British gradually regained control and ultimately managed to suppress the revolt.



1. Ideology:

- a. The rebels lacked a clear understanding of the colonial rule. There was no coherent ideology and an alternative to what they were against. Backward looking character of revolt was the main reason for its failure.

2. Leadership, planning and organization:

- a. On the one hand, the Nawabs, princes, and aristocracy were not able to provide organisation, coordination and centralised leadership to the revolt. On the other hand, the sepoys didn't have the training and experience of strategy-making in war. Thus, the revolt was largely unplanned, and its effects remained limited.
- a. Lack of unity among rebels was another important factor responsible for the failure of revolt. There was no coherent plan of action.

2. Participation:

- a. The revolt affected only Bengal Army, while Madras and Bombay armies remained largely untouched. Recent recruits from Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans rather helped the British actively to suppress the revolt.
- b. Some Indian rulers either refused to join and some were actively in support of British. The Nizam of Hyderabad, Gulab Singh of Kashmir, Sikh ruler of Patiala Nabha and Jind, Holkars of Indore, Scindia of Gwalior, Nawab of Bhopal, Ruler of Tehri are some who helped the British suppress the revolt. They were referred to as 'breakwaters to storm'.
- c. Big Zamindars backed off once restoration of their lands was promised. Moneylenders who faced the wrath of revolt sought British patronage and protection.
- d. Western educated Indians supported the British rule believing that it will modernise Indian society.
- e. The Eastern, southern and western parts remained unaffected. Most of the Punjab, Rajputana and Kashmir remained peaceful.

3. Resources:

- a. The mutineers were poorly equipped with very few guns and muskets.

- b. Better means of communication (eg electric telegraph line) and better weapons available with British also proved decisive rebels fought with traditional weapons such as swords. As a result of which rebels failed to stand the challenge of British.

Changes introduced after the revolt of 1858

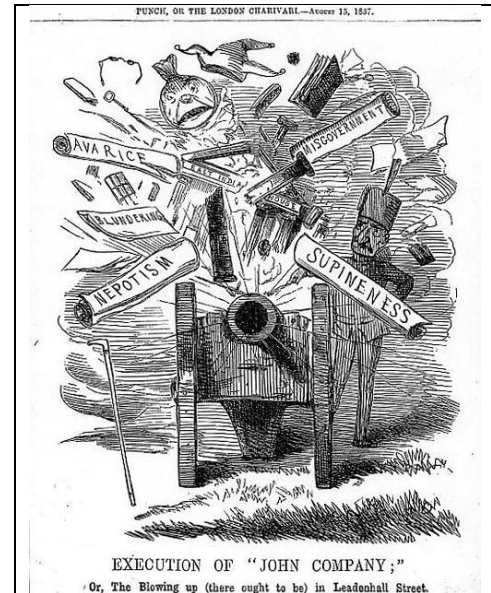
After 1858, the main purpose of British policy was to check the possibility of another revolt of masses.

1. Marked the **end of Mughal rule as well as the East India Company**. The direct **British Raj** commenced.

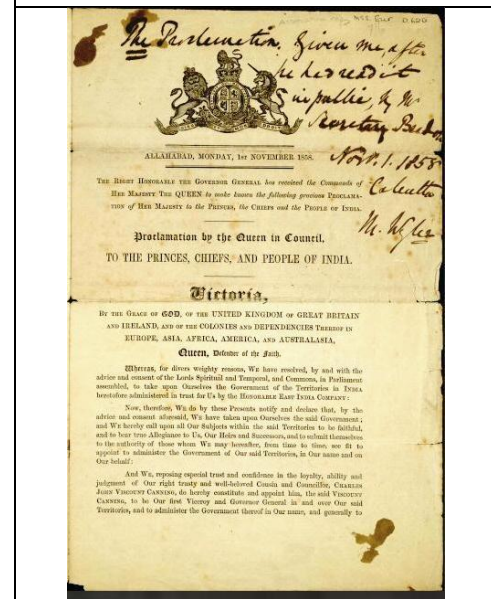
- a. British Parliament saw 1857 Revolt as the perfect opportunity (convenient excuse) to abolish the rule of the EIC in India. The Government of India Act 1858 transferred all East India Company's possessions to the British crown. The East India Company returned to being just a trading organization.
- b. Sovereignty over the Indian empire was asserted aggressively by delegitimizing the Mughals, the **mock trial of Zafar** being crucial for this, and by projecting Victoria as the benevolent and omnipotent monarch of all Indian subjects. Zafar was sent off to Rangoon where he died in 1862.

2. The **Queen Victoria's Proclamation** announced by Lord Canning on 1st Nov 1858 promised several changes in the nature and character of British Rule.

- a. Due regard would be given to ancient usages and customs of India. Government will not interfere in personal matters of people.
- b. No further extension of territorial possessions. The age of territorial expansion of British rule ended.



Parliament re-asserts the control. EIC is dismantled. Its navy is disbanded, army is absorbed in the Royal army and the Raj begins. Cartoon in Punch shows the East India House being blown up by the cannon.



The Doctrine of Lapse was withdrawn and British promised to respect, dignity and honors of native princess.

- c. Administration will be managed by keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of people.
- d. It was emphasized that no discrimination would be practiced against Indians in appointment under state. Official services would be open to all without any discrimination of race or creed. To give expression to this pledge the **Indian Civil Services Act of 1861** was passed, which provided for an annual competitive examination to be held in London for recruitment to the covenanted civil service.

3. **The Government of India Act of 1858**

- a. The role of the Governor-General became more pronounced, and his profile was now counted as the Viceroy as well.
- b. The previous dual government of Board of Control (established under the 1784 Pitt's India Act) and Board of Directors of the Company was abolished. The powers were now vested in the Secretary of State for India who was a minister of cabinet rank who was assisted by the **India Council comprising of 15 members**. There were 15 advisors to the new set up who had wide experience of working in India. Thus, the British Parliament was trying to create a mechanism to avoid any further chances of revolt in India.

4. **Policy of caution and conservation** along with **divide and rule** was followed by British in India after 1858.

- a. There was a shift in policy whereby the support of **princely rulers and landed magnates**, so called natural leaders of society (conservative elements), was actively sought to stabilize British rule. The colonial state became increasingly undemocratic and reactionary.
- b. It was felt that **socio-religious reforms** were responsible for the outbreak of revolt. The promise of reform and modernization was not vaporized.



- c. Rather, an active policy of divide and rule was pursued.
 - i. Hindu-Muslim unity during the revolt was met by **communal British policies**.
 - ii. The **Tenancy Act of 1858** was passed to give safeguard to the ryots.
- d. A situation of **mutual distrust** was created between Indians and British.
- e. **Racial arrogance** of the British grew deeper. British government became more racist after 1858.

5. Policy of direct economic plunder was abandoned, and indirect methods were used to exploit Indian resources. Investment of foreign capital was the main instrument of exploitation after 1858.

6. Reforms in Military

- a. The sepoys were now seen with suspicion and therefore the British policy came to be governed by the idea of 'division and counterpoise'. This means that the composition of the army was changed to manage a regional division within it.
- b. **Number of Indian soldiers** was reduced from 2.38 lakh to 1.46 lakh. Number of European soldiers was increased from 45000 to 65000. The **ratio between Indian and European** was fixed at 2:1 for Bengal and 3:1 for Bombay and Madras presidencies.
- c. Indian were divided into Martial and non-martial groups. Those groups which participated in revolt were termed as non-martial and the groups which supported the suppression of revolt were termed as martial groups.

1) Anti-colonial tribal revolts in India were a direct outcome of the disruption of the tribal way of life discuss (10m) ?

tribal societies's social and economic system are self-sufficient and autonomous in nature. disruption in social norms and economical conditions led to disturbance in tribal way of life

1) disruption 1) before britisher tribal practicing jhumming agriculture. britisher force tribal people to settle in same place to collect more agricult tax. they settle other tribal people .

2) britisher created the forest law which prevent the tribal people from using forest resources and imply high tax on forest produce.

3) britisher buys forest produce like silk kakuun a very cheap price. and impose impose heavy tax on natural resouces. tribal people lended money from money lender they are mostly higher hindu (ex mahajans , shetes) and they failed to repay his dept, because of britisher economically exploitory policy.

revolt : tribal revolted against british in leader ship of birsa munda.

improvement : you can write the quantitative like more than 100 revolt happen that time it make question asked. or question depended.

1) forest settlements 2) private property tenants customary -> contractual 3) political chief justice system. forest (social -religious, political, economical, administrative) points. female.