Revolt of 1857 - Sepoy Mutiny

The Revolt of 1857 (Also regarded as India's First War of Independence) was an extremely important event in Indian history. It was initiated by the sepoy of the company which arouses the accumulated grievances of the people against the Company’s administration and of their dislike for the foreign regime.

Causes of the revolt:

- In 1857, a Revolt broke out in Northern and Central India and nearly swept away British rule.
- The Revolt began with a mutiny of the sepoys, or the Indian soldiers of the Company’s army, but soon engulfed wide regions and people.
- Millions of peasants, artisans, and soldiers fought heroically for over a year and by their courage and sacrifice wrote a glorious chapter in the history of the Indian people.
- There was discrimination among the British and Indian soldiers. It has been believed that the behavior of British soldiers towards Indian soldiers was quite rude.
- The Revolt of 1857 was much more than a mere product of sepoy discontent. It was, in reality, a product of the accumulated grievances of the people against the Company's administration and of their dislike for the foreign regime.
- By January 1857, rumours had been taking rounds that the English cartridges were greased with animal fat. This was further sparked when during a fight, a low-caste sepoy taunted a high caste sepoy for 'losing his caste' after biting the cartridge as they were greased with the fat of pigs and cows.
- There had also been rumours that the British were trying to destroy the religions of the Indian people.
- One of the other reasons was the introduction of a new land revenue system which snatched the land from cultivators.
The major causes of 1857 Revolt can be studied under the following heads –

**Economic Cause**

- Perhaps the most important cause of the people’s discontent was the economic exploitation of the country by the British and the complete destruction of its traditional economic fabric.

**Socio-Political Cause**

- Other general causes of revolt were the British land revenue policies and the systems of law and administration.
- In particular, a large number of peasant proprietors lost their lands to traders and most of the lenders found themselves hopelessly burdened under debt.
- The common people were hard hit by the prevalence of corruption at the lower levels of administration. The police, petty officials, and lower (law) courts were notoriously corrupt.
- The middle and upper classes of Indian society, particularly in the North, were hard hit by their exclusion from the well-paid higher posts in the administration.
- Displacement of Indian rulers by the East India Company meant the sudden withdrawal of the patronage and the impoverishment of those who had depended upon it.
- Religious preachers, pandits, and maulavis, who felt that their entire future was threatened, were to play an important role in spreading hatred against the foreign rule.
- The British remained perpetual foreigners in the country. For one, there was no social link or communication between them and the Indians.
- Unlike foreign conquerors before them, they did not mix socially even with the upper classes of Indians; instead, they had a feeling of racial superiority and treated Indians with contempt and arrogance.
- The British did not come to settle in India and to make it their home. Their main objective was to enrich themselves and then go back to Britain along with Indian wealth.
- Munshi Mohanlal of Delhi, who remained loyal to the British during the Revolt, wrote that even "those who bad grown rich under British rule showed hidden delight at British reverses."
- Another loyalist, Moinuddin Hasan Khan, pointed out that the people looked upon the British as “foreign trespassers.”
- The British army suffered major reverses in the First Afghan War (1838-42) and the Punjab Wars (1845-49), and the Crimean War (1854-56).
- In 1855-56, the Santhal tribesmen of Bihar and Bengal rose up armed with axes and bows and arrows and revealed the potentialities of a popular uprising by temporarily sweeping away British rule from their area.
- The British ultimately won these wars and suppressed the Santhal uprising; however, the disasters British suffered in major battles revealed that the British army could be defeated by determined fighting, even by an Asian army.
- The annexation of Awadh by Lord Dalhousie in 1856 was widely resented in India in general and in Avadh in particular. It created an atmosphere of rebellion in Avadh and in the Company’s army.
- Dalhousie’s action angered the Company’s sepoys, as most of them came from Avadh.
- The annexations rule of Dalhousie, created panic among rulers of the native states. They now discovered that their most grvellous loyalty to the British had failed to satisfy the British greed for territory.
- This policy of annexation was, for example, directly responsible for making Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and Bahadur Shah their staunch enemies.
- Nana Sahib was the adopted son of Baji Rao II, the last Peshwa. The British refused to grant Nana Sahib the pension they were paying to Baji Rao II, who died in 1851.
- The British insistence on the annexation of Jhansi incensed the proud of Rani Lakshmi Bai who wanted her adopted son to succeed her deceased husband.
- The house of the Mughals was humiliated when Dalhousie announced in 1849 that the Successor to Bahadur Shah would have to abandon the historic Red Fort and move to a humbler residence at the Qutab on the outskirts of Delhi.
- In 1856, Canning announced that after Bahadur Shah’s death, the Mughals would lose the title of kings and would be known as mere princes.

**Religious Cause**

- An important role in turning the people against British rule was played by their fear that it endangered their religion. This fear was largely due to the activities of the Christian missionaries who were "to be seen everywhere — in the schools, in the hospitals, in the prisons and at the market place."
• The missionaries tried to convert people and made violent and vulgar public attacks on Hinduism and Islam. They openly ridiculed and denounced the long cherished customs and traditions of the people.

• In 1850, the Government enacted a law, which enabled a convert to Christianity to inherit his ancestral property.

• Religious sentiments were also hurt by the official policy of taxing lands belonging to temples and mosques and to their priests or the charitable institutions which had been exempted from taxation by previous Indian rulers.

• The many Brahmin and Muslim families dependent on the religious activities were aroused to fury, and they began to propagate that the British were trying to undermine the religions of India.

• The sepoys also had religious or caste grievances of their own. The Indians of those days were very strict in observing caste rules, etc.

• The military authorities forbade the sepoys to wear caste and sectarian marks, beards, or turbans.

• In 1856, an Act was passed under which every new recruit undertook to serve even overseas, if required. This hurt the sepoys' sentiments as, according to the current religious belief of the Hindus, travel across the sea was forbidden and led to less of caste.

Historical Cause

• The sepoys also had numerous other grievances against their employers. They were treated with contempt by their British officers.

• The sepoys' dissatisfaction was because of the recent order that they would not be given the Foreign Service allowance (batta) when serving in Sindh or in the Punjab. This order resulted in a big cut in the salaries of a large number of them.

• The dissatisfaction of the sepoys had, in fact, a long history. A sepoy mutiny had broken out in Bengal as early as 1764. The authorities had suppressed it by blowing away 30 sepoys.

• In 1806, the sepoys at Vellore mutinied but were crushed with terrible violence.

• In 1824, the 47th Regiment of sepoys at Barrackpore refused to go to Burma by the sea-route. The Regiment was disbanded, its unarmed men were fired upon by artillery, and the leaders of the sepoys were hanged.

• In 1844, seven battalions revolted on the question of salaries and batta.

• The sepoys in Afghanistan were on the verge of revolt during the Afghan War. Two subedars, a Muslim and a Hindu, were shot dead for giving expression to the discontent in the army.

Diffusion of 1857 Revolt

• The Revolt began at Meerut, 36 miles from Delhi, on 10 May 1857 and then gathering force rapidly spread across Northern India.

• It soon embraced a vast area from the Punjab in the North and the Narmada in the South to Bihar in the East and Rajputana in the West.

• Even before the outbreak at Meerut, Mangal Pande had become a martyr at Barrackpore.

• Mangal Pande, a young soldier, was hanged on 29 March 1857 for revolting single-handed and attacking his superior officers. This and many similar incidents were a sign that discontent and rebellion were brewing among the sepoys, and then came the explosion at Meerut.

• On 24 April 1857, ninety men of the 3rd Native Cavalry refused to accept the greased cartridges. On 9 May 1857, eighty five of them were dismissed, sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, and put into fetters. This sparked off a general mutiny among the Indian soldiers stationed at Meerut.

• The very next day, on 10 May, sepoys released their imprisoned comrades, killed their officers, and unfurled the banner of revolt. As if drawn by a magnet they set off for Delhi after sunset.

• When the Meerut soldiers appeared in Delhi the next morning, the local infantry joined them, killed their own European officers, and seized the city.

• The rebellious soldiers proclaimed the aged and powerless Bahadur Shah the Emperor of India.

• Delhi was soon to become the center of the Great Revolt and Bahadur Shah its great symbol.

• Bahadur Shah, in turn, under the instigation and perhaps the pressure of the sepoys, soon wrote letters to all the chiefs and rulers of India urging them to organize a confederacy of Indian states to fight and replace the British regime.

• The entire Bengal Army soon rose in revolt which spread quickly. Avadh, Rohilkhand, the Bundelkhand, Central India, large parts of Bihar, and the East Punjab, all shook off British authority.

• In many of the princely states, rulers remained loyal to their British overlord but the soldiers revolted or remained on the brink of revolt.

• More than 20,000 of Gwalior's troops went over to Tantia Tope and the Rani of Jhansi.
Many small chiefs of Rajasthan and Maharashtra, revolted with the support of the people, who were quite hostile to the British. Local rebellions also occurred in Hyderabad and Bengal.

The tremendous sweep and breadth of the Revolt were matched by its depth. Everywhere in Northern and Central India, the mutiny of the sepoys was followed by popular revolts of the civilian population.

After the sepoys had destroyed British authority, the common people was up in arms often lighting with spears and axes, bows and arrows, lathis and scythes, and crude muskets.

It was the wide participation to the Revolt by the peasantry and the artisans which gave it real strength as well as the character of a popular revolt, especially in the areas at present included in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The popular character of the Revolt of 1857 also became evident when the British tried to smash it. They had to wage a vigorous and ruthless war not only against the rebellious sepoys but also against the people of Avadh, North Western Provinces and Agra, Central India, and Western Bihar, burning entire villages and massacring villagers and urban people.

The sepoys and the people fought staunchly and valiantly up to the very end. They were defeated but their spirit remained unbroken.

Much of the strength of the Revolt of 1857 lay in Hindu-Muslim unity. Among the soldiers and the people as well as among the leaders there was complete cooperation as between Hindus and Muslims.

In fact, the events of 1857 clearly bring out that the people and politics of India were not basically communal in medieval times and before 1858.

Centers of 1857 Revolt

**Delhi**

- At Delhi, the nominal and symbolic; leadership belonged to the Emperor Bahadur Shah, but the real command lay with a Court of Soldiers headed by General Bakht Khan who had led the revolt of the Bareilly troops and brought them to Delhi.
- In the British army, Bakht Khan was an ordinary subedar of artillery.
- Bakht Khan represented the popular and plebian element at the headquarters of the Revolt.
- After the British occupation of Delhi in September 1857, Bakht Khan went to Lucknow and continued to fight the British till he died in a battle on 13 May 1859.
- The Emperor Bahadur Shah was perhaps the weakest link in the chain of leadership of the Revolt.

**Kanpur**

- At Kanpur, the Revolt was led by Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Baji Rao II, the last Peshwa.
- Nana Sahib expelled the English from Kanpur with the help of the sepoys and proclaimed himself the Peshwa. At the same time, he acknowledged Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India and declared himself to be his Governor.
- The chief burden of fighting on behalf of Nana Sahib fell on the shoulders of Tantia Tope, one of his most loyal servants.
- Tantia Tope has won immortal fame by his patriotism, determined fighting, and skillful guerrilla operations.
- Azimullah was another loyal servant of Nana Sahib. He was an expert in political propaganda.
- Unfortunately, Nana Sahib tarnished his (Azimullah’s) brave record by deceitfully killing the garrison at Kanpur after he had agreed to give them safe conduct.

**Lucknow**

- The revolt at Lucknow was led by the Begum of Avadh who had proclaimed her young son, Birjis Kadr, as the Nawab of Avadh.

**Jhansi**

- One of the great leaders of the Revolt of 1857 and perhaps one of the greatest heroines of Indian history, was the young Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi.
- The young Rani joined the rebels when the British refused to acknowledge her right to adopt an heir to the Jhansi gaddi (throne) annexed her state, and threatened to treat her as an instigator of the rebellion of the sepoys at Jhansi.
- Rani captured Gwalior with the help of Tantia Tope and her trusted Afghan guards.
- Maharaja Sindhia, loyal to the British, made an attempt to fight the Rani but most of his troops deserted to her.
- The brave Rani died fighting on 17 June 1858.

**Arrah (Bihar)**

- Kunwar Singh, a ruined and discontented zamindar of Jagdishpur near Arrah, was the chief organizer of the Revolt in Bihar.
- Though nearly 80 years old, Kunwar Singh was perhaps the most outstanding military leader and strategist of the Revolt.
• Kunwar Singh fought with the British in Bihar, and, later joined hands with Nana Sahib’s forces; he also campaigned in Avadh and Central India.

• Racing back home, Kunwar Singh treated the British forts near Arrah. But this proved to be his last battle. He had sustained a fatal wound in the fighting. He died on 27 April 1858 in his ancestral house in the village of Jagdishpur.

• Maulavi Ahmadullah of Faizabad was another outstanding leader of the Revolt. He was a native of Madras where he had started preaching armed rebellion.

Outcome of 1857 Revolt

• The Revolt was suppressed. Sheer courage could not win against a powerful and determined enemy who planned its every step.

• The rebels were dealt an early blow when the British captured Delhi on 20 September 1857 after prolonged and bitter fighting.

• The aged Emperor Bahadur Shah was taken prisoner. The Royal Princes were captured and butchered on the spot. The Emperor was tried and exiled to Rangoon where he died in 1862.

• John Lawrence, Outran, Havelock, Neil, Campbell, and Hugh Rose were some of the British commanders who earned military fame in the course of the revolt.

• One by one, all the great leaders of the Revolt fell. Nana Sahib was defeated at Kanpur. Defiant to the very end and refusing to surrender, he escaped to Nepal early in 1859, never to be heard of again.

• Tantia Tope escaped into the jungles of Central India where he carried on bitter and brilliant guerrilla warfare until April 1859 when he was betrayed by a zamindar friend and captured while asleep. He was put to death after a hurried trial on 15 April 1859.

• The Rani Jhansi had died on the field of battle earlier on 17 June 1858.

• By 1859, Kunwar Singh, Bakht Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, Rao Sahib brother of Nana Sahib, and Maulavi Ahmadullah were all dead, while the Begum of Avadh was compelled to hide in Nepal.

• By the end of 1859, British authority over India was fully reestablished, but the Revolt had not been in vain. It was the first great struggle of the Indian people for freedom from British imperialism. It paved the way for the rise of the modern national movement.

Causes of failure of the revolt

All India participation was absent, All classes did not join, Poor arms and equipment, Uncoordinated and poorly organized, No unified ideology.

• Indian sepoys and people were short of modern weapons and other materials of war. Most of them fought with such ancient weapons as pikes and swords.

• Indian sepoys and other revolt participants were also poorly organized. There was communication gap and they lacked consensus.

• The rebel units did not have a common plan of action, or authoritative heads, or centralized leadership.

• The sepoys were brave and selfless but they were also ill-disciplined. Sometimes they behaved more like a riotous mob than a disciplined army.

• The uprisings in different parts of the country were completely uncoordinated.

• Once the Indian people overthrew British power from an area, they did not know what sort of power to create in its place.

• They failed to evolve unity of action. They were suspicious and jealous of one another and often indulged in suicidal quarrels. For example, the Begum of Avadh quarreled with Maulavi Ahmadullah and the Mughal princes with the sepoy-generals.

• The peasants destroyed revenue records and money-lenders’ books, and overthrown the new zamindars, became passive not knowing what to do next.
Modern nationalism was yet unknown in India. Patriotism meant love of one's small locality or region or at most one's state.

In fact, the Revolt of 1857 played an important role in bringing the Indian people together and imparting to them the consciousness of belonging to one country.

Hindu-Muslim Unity Factor

- During the entire revolt, there was complete cooperation between Hindus and Muslims at all levels—people, soldiers, leaders.
- All rebels acknowledged Bahadur Shah Zafar, a Muslim, as the emperor and the first impulse of the Hindu sepoys at Meerut was to march to Delhi, the Mughal imperial Capital. Rebel and sepoys, both Hindu and Muslims, respected each other’s sentiments.
- Immediate banning of cow slaughter was ordered once the revolt was successful in a particular area.
- Both Hindus and Muslims were well represented in leadership, for instance Nana Saheb had Azimullah, a Muslim and an expert in political propaganda, as an aide, while Laxmibai had the solid support of Afghan Soldiers.
- **Thus the events of 1857 demonstrated that the people and politics of India were not basically communal before 1858.**
- The revolt of 1857 had demonstrated the fact that people and politics in India was not communal before the revolt of 1857.

Criticism of 1857 Revolt

- Even though spread over a vast territory and widely popular among the people, the Revolt of 1857 could not embrace the entire country or all the groups and classes of Indian society.
- Most rulers of the Indian states and the big zamindars, selfish to the core and fearful of British might, refused to join in.
- On the contrary, the Sindhi of Gwalior, the Holkar of Indore, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Raja of Jodhpur and other Rajput rulers, the Nawab of Bhopal, the rulers of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, and Kashmir, the Ranas of Nepal, and many other ruling chiefs, and a large number of big zamindars gave active help to the British in suppressing the Revolt. In fact, no more than one per cent of the chiefs of India joined the Revolt. Governor-General Canning later remarked that these rulers and chiefs "acted as the breakwaters to the storm which would have otherwise swept us in one great wave."
- Madras, Bombay, Bengal, and the Western Punjab remained undisturbed, even though the popular feeling in these provinces favored the rebels.
- Except for the discontented and the dispossessed zamindars, the middle and upper classes were mostly critical of the rebels; most of the propertied classes were either cool towards them or actively hostile to them.
- The money-lenders were the chief targets of the villagers' attacks. They were, therefore, naturally hostile to the Revolt.
- The merchants too gradually became unfriendly. The rebels were compelled to impose heavy taxation on them in order to finance the war or to seize their stocks of foodstuffs to feed the army.
- The merchants often hid their wealth and goods and refused to give free supplies to the rebels.
- The big merchants or Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras supported the British because their main profits came from foreign trade and economic connections with the British merchants.
- The zamindars of Bengal also remained loyal to the British. They were after all a creation of the British.
- The modern educated Indians also did not support the Revolt. They were repelled by the rebels' appeals to superstitions and their opposition to progressive social measures.
- The educated Indians wanted to end the backwardness of the country. They mistakenly believed that British rule would help them accomplish these tasks of modernization while the rebels would take the country backward.
- The revolutionaries of 1857 proved to be more farsighted in this respect; they had a better, instinctive understanding of the evils of foreign rule and of the necessity to get rid of it.
- On the other hand, they did not realize, as did the educated intelligentsia, that the country had fallen prey to foreigners precisely because it had stuck to rotten and outmoded customs, traditions, and institutions.
- In any case, it cannot be said that the educated Indians were anti-national or loyal to a foreign regime. As events after 1858 were to show, they were soon to lead a powerful and modern national movement against British rule.
**Impact of the Revolt**

The revolt of 1857 marks a turning point in the history of India. It led to changes in the system of administration and the policy of the Government.

a) **Policy Change**
   - The Queen’s Proclamation of November 1858 announced the policy of the British government to be followed from now on in India.
   - It announced that the policy of territorial extension was to be abandoned. The native rulers were assured of the safety of their territory, rights and honour if they cooperated with British.
   - The right of a ruler to adopt a child in the absence of a natural heir was accepted.
   - The government regarded the native rulers as the bulwark against the masses and henceforth followed a policy of protecting this reactionary segment of the Indian society.
   - A policy of divide and rule was actively pursued to keep the Hindus and Muslims divided.

b) **Administrative Changes:**
   - On January 1st, 1877 Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the Queen Empress of India and the administration of India was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown.
   - India was to be administered by the Secretary of State and his fifteen-member council through the Viceroy. The Governor-general became the viceroy and the representative of the Crown in India.

c) **Reorganization of the Army:**
   - The army was re-organized to strengthen British control over the country and avert any further rebellions in future.
   - The number of British soldiers was increased and all the higher posts and key positions were filled up by the British.

d) **Communal and Racial Bitterness:**
   - The revolt of 1857 created a big gap between the different religious communities especially the Hindus and the Muslims as each blamed the other for its failure.
   - The Indians, however, developed a deep racial bitterness towards the English and opposed the inferior status granted to them.

### Important Books on 1857

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The First Indian War of Independence-1857-59</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Karl Marx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of Indian Revolt</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Sayed Ahmad Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The India War of Independence</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>V.D. Savarkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sepoy Mutiny and the rebellion of 1857</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>R.C. Mazumdar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rebellion in Indian Mutinies</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>S.B. Chowdhury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion, 1857 : A Symposium</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>P.C. Joshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>S.N. Sen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Different leaders Associated with the Revolt of 1857

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Leader/Advisory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrackpore</td>
<td>Mangal Pandey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>Bahadur Shah II, General Bakht Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>Hakim Ahsanullah (Chief advisor to Bahadur Shah II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>Begum Hazrat Mahal, Birjis Qadir, Ahmadullah (advisor of the ex-Nawab of Awadh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanpur</td>
<td>Nana Sahib, Rao Sahib (nephew of Nana), Tantia Tope, Azimullah Khan (advisor of Nana Sahib)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhansi</td>
<td>Rani Laxmibai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar (Jagdishpur)</td>
<td>Kunwar Singh, Amar Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allahabad and Banaras</td>
<td>Maulvi Liyakat Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faizabad</td>
<td>Maulvi Ahmadullah (He declared the Revolt as Jihad against English)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Farrukhabad | Tufzal Hasan Khan
Bijnaur | Mohammad Khan
Muradabad | Abdul Ali Khan
Bareilly | Khan Bahadur Khan
Mandsor | Firoz Shah
Gwalior/Kanpur | Tantia Tope
Assam | Kandapareshwar Singh, Manirama Datta
Orissa | Surendra Shahi, Ujjwal Shahi
Kullu | Raja Pratap Singh
Rajasthan | Jaidayal Singh and Hardayal Singh
Gorakhpur | Gajadhar Singh
Mathura | Sevi Singh, Kadam Singh

Do you know?
- The Revolt was written about and discussed not only within the confines of India but also in England, France and Germany.
- Benjamin Disraeli in the House of Commons on 27 July 1857, asked, “Is it a military mutiny, or is it a national revolt?”
- Karl Marx in the summer of 1857 expressed the same doubt in the pages of New York Daily Tribune: “What he (John Bull) considers a military mutiny”, he wrote, “is in truth a national revolt”.
- According to Marxist historians, the 1857 revolt was “the struggle of the soldier-peasant democratic combine against foreign as well as feudal bondage”.
- Some views such as those of L.E.R. Rees Christians or T. R. Holmes who saw in it a conflict between civilization and barbarism were also forwarded.

Safety Valve Theory & 1857 Revolt
- It was believed that in order to avoid another political crisis like 1857, a vent was required to channelize the discontent of Indians.
- For this, the retired Civil Servant A O Hume, founder the Indian National Congress. This theory is called Safety Valve Theory.
- The concept of Safety Valve Theory says that the British had seen the political situation in the country leading to another rebellion on the lines of the Mutiny of 1857; and they wished to avoid such a situation.
- So, they wanted to provide a platform to the people, where they could discuss their political problems. Indian National Congress was founded by a Retired Civil Servant and not by any Indian.
- It was said that the INC was started by Viceroy Lord Dufferin with the help of an ex Civil Services member as a “Safety Valve” against the popular discontent.

Which revolt was the first to happen, even before the revolt of 1857, and which is also known as The First War of Independence?
Answer: The ‘Paika Bidroha’ (Paika rebellion) of 1817 led by Bakshi Jagabandhu [Bidyadhar Mohapatra] in Khurda of Odisha

Points to Remember
- In the Faqir uprising, the leader Chirage Ali was supported by two leaders namely Bhawani Pathak and Devi Chadudhrani.
- The real founder of Wahabi movement was Abdul Wahab of Nazd (1703 to 1787)
- Bhagat Jawahar Mal, the founder of Kuka movement was popularly known as Sian Saheb.
- Ram Singh the other important Leader of the Kuka revolt was deported to Rangoon in 1872.
- Farazi or Faraidi movement was founded by Haji Shariat Ullah of East Bengal.
- Stoppage of allowances for act-ive service in a foreign country was the cause of mutiny of the Bengal army in 1844.
- In Saurashtra the revolt of the Wagheras took place against the imposition of British rule.
• Kerala Verma, Raja of Wayanad, raised the banner of revolt against the British.
• The failure of the British Government to withdraw and restore Ahom government after the Burmese war caused the revolt of Assam in 1820’s.
• Sikandar Shah, the Nizam of Hyderabad revolted against the imposition of subsidiary alliance of Hyderabad;
• The revolt was sparked off on March 29, 1857. Mangal Pandey, a Brahmin Sepoy fired at the Adjutant Surgeant Bath.
• The 3rd cavalry regiment at Meerut refused to touch the greased cartridges.
• Dhondu pant, who led the revolt at Kanpur is popularly known as Nana Saheb.
• Rani Laksmi Bai was the widowed queen of Raja Gangadhar Rao.
• Begum Hunt Mahal at Luck-now declared her H years old son Birjis Qadar as Nawab.
• At the time of great uprising, Lord Canning was the Governor General of India.
• Colonel Ripley was killed at Delhi by his own troops.
• The English bribed Mina Ilahi Bash, a close relative of the last Mughal Emperor to get the military secrets.
• Bahadur Shah Jafar was deported to Rangoon.
• Tantiya Tope was betrayed by one of his friends Man Singh.
• Chiman Sahib, the younger brother of Raja of Kolhapur organised a troop against the English.
• Prominent persons hanged were Tantiya Tope, Abdur Rahim Khan Rohllla, Alauddin Maulvi Syed, Arjun Krishan Patel, Awachit etc.
• Zinat Mahal was the chief queen of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II.
• Bakht Khan was the Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal Emperor.
• At the call of Ali Nazi Khan, the Hindu and Muslim sepoys swore by the Ganges and the Quran that they would lay down their lives to drive the English out of the land.
• The focal points of the revolt included Delhi, Kanpur, Luck-now, Bareilly, Benaras, Jhansi and Arrah.
• 'March to Delhi' was the battle cry for the rebels.
• 'Educated middle class' did not support the revolt of 1857.
• Kunwar Singh of Arrah is regarded as the 'Lion of Bihar'.
• Amer Singh, the brother of Kunwar Singh continued the struggle after his death.
• Sir Hugh Rose described Rani Laxmi Bai as "The best and bravest military leader of the rebels".
• Begum Hazrat Mahal refused to accept the pension offered to her by British and preferred to die unmourn in Nepal.
• Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II wrote poetries under the Pen name ‘Zafar’.

Objective Questions

1. Which among the following was not an economic cause of the revolt of 1857?
   (A) Heavy taxation  
   (B) But down on major patronage for artisans and handicrafts  
   (C) increasing availability of market for Indian cotton.  
   (D) increased pressure on agricultural land  
   Correct Answer: (C) increasing availability of market for Indian cotton.

2. Who among the following British officer captured Banaras during the revolt of 1857?
   (A) General John Nicholson  
   (B) Sir Hugh Wheeler  
   (C) Colonel Oncell  
   (D) William Taylor and Eye  
   Correct Answer: (C) Colonel Oncell

3. Which of the following pair is correctly matched?
   (A) Kanpur – Nana Sahib, Rao Sahib (nephew of Nana), Tantia Tope, Azimullah Khan (advisor of Nana Sahib)  
   (B) Alahabad – Maulavi Liyakat Ali  
   (C) Farrukhabad – Tufzal Hasan Khan  
   (D) All of the above  
   Correct Answer: (D) All of the above

4. Who among the following British officer died soon due to a mortal wound received during the fighting during 1857 revolt in Delhi?
   (A) General John Nicholson  
   (B) Sir Hugh Wheeler  
   (C) Major Hudson  
   (D) General Neil  
   Correct Answer: (A) General John Nicholson

5. Under whose governor-general ship, the Revolt of 1857 occurred?
   (A) Lord Canning  
   (B) Lord Irwin  
   (C) Lord Lytton  
   (D) Lord Willington  
   Correct Answer: (A) Lord Canning

   (A) Karl Marx  
   (B) Syed Ahmad Khan  
   (C) R. C. Mazumdar
7. Sir Huge Rose described whom as 'the best and bravest military leader of the rebel'?
   (A) Begum Hazrat Mahal
   (B) Rani Laxmi Bai
   (C) Kuar Singh
   (D) Bahadur Shah Zafar
   Correct Answer: (B) Rani Laxmi Bai

8. About which kingdom did Dalhousie say that it was a "cherry that will drop into our mouth one day"?
   (A) Oudh
   (B) Jhansi
   (C) Mysore
   (D) Patiala
   Correct Answer: (A) Oudh

9. Who was the Governor General during the time of Sepoy Mutiny?
   (A) Lord Dalhousie
   (B) Lord Ripon
   (C) Lord Canning
   (D) Lord Reading
   Correct Answer: (C) Lord Canning

10. Who of the following was neither captured nor killed by the British?
    (A) Tantiya Tope
    (B) Nana Saheb
    (C) Mangal Pandey
    (D) Jhansi Lakshmibai
    Correct Answer: (B) Nana Saheb

11. Who led the British forces which defeated Jhansi Lakshmibai?
    (A) Henry Havelock
    (B) John Hearsey
    (C) Henry Barnard
    (D) Hugh Rose
    Correct Answer: (D) Hugh Rose

12. To which regiment did Mangal Pandey belong?
    (A) 34 Native Infantry
    (B) 7 Oudh Regiment
    (C) 19 Native Infantry
    (D) Madras Regiment
    Correct Answer: (A) 34 Native Infantry

13. Who of the following was the adopted son the last Peshwa Baji Rao II?
    (A) Tantiya Tope
    (B) Damodar Rao
    (C) Nana Saheb
    (D) Anand Rao
    Correct Answer: (C) Nana Saheb

14. Which of the following states was the first to be annexed by the Doctrine of Lapse?
    (A) Nagpur
    (B) Satara
    (C) Jhansi
    Correct Answer: (B) Satara

15. At which of the following places was the revolt led by Kunwar Singh?
    (A) Meerut
    (B) Bihar
    (C) Bareilly
    (D) Gwalior
    Correct Answer: (B) Bihar

16. Which place witnessed the incident of Mangal Pandey firing upon British officers?
    (A) Barrackpore
    (B) Meerut
    (C) Gwalior
    (D) Delhi
    Correct Answer: (A) Barrackpore

17. In which country was Bahadur Shah II exiled by the British after the end of war of independence?
    (A) Nepal
    (B) Afghanistan
    (C) Iran
    (D) Burma
    Correct Answer: (D) Burma

18. The History of the War of Indian Independence is a book written by -
    (A) Veer Savarkar
    (B) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
    (C) Gopal Krishna Gokhale
    (D) Bankim Chandra Chatterjee
    Correct Answer: (A) Veer Savarkar

19. Who amongst the following leaders of ‘1857’ was the first to lay down his/her life?
    (A) Kunwar Singh
    (B) Tantiya Tope
    (C) Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi
    (D) Mangal Pandey
    Correct Answer: (D) Mangal Pandey

20. Who led the revolt against the British in 1857 at Bareilly?
    (A) Birjis Qadir
    (B) Bakht Khan
    (C) Khan Bahadur Khan
    (D) Azimullah Khan
    Correct Answer: (D) Azimullah Khan

21. The ruler of which one of the following States was removed from power by the British on the pretext of misgovernance?
    (A) Awadh
    (B) Jhansi
    (C) Nagpur
    (D) Satara
    Correct Answer: (A) Awadh

22. Who led the rebellion against the British at Lucknow?
    (A) Zeenat Mahal
    (B) Tantiya Tope
    (D) Udaipur
    Correct Answer: (B) Satara
(C) Begum Hazrat Mahal
(D) Nana Saheb
Correct Answer: (C) Begum Hazrat Mahal

23. At which of the following places was the Rani of Jhansi, Lakshmibai defeated finally by the British?
(A) Badli-ki-serai
(B) Kotah-ki-serai
(C) Chinhat
(D) Meerut
Correct Answer: (B) Kotah-ki-serai

24. Who called 1857 Revolt as the First War of Indian Independence?
(A) Dadabhai Naoroji
(B) V. D. Savarkar
(C) B K Dutt
(D) Gopala Krishna Gokale
Correct Answer: (B) V. D. Savarkar

25. The Sepoy of the Third Cavalry at Meerut revolted on
(A) 10th May, 1857
(B) 21st June, 1832
(C) 22nd April, 1833
(D) 1st October, 1856
Correct Answer: (A) 10th May, 1857

26. The Vellore Mutiny took place in
(A) 1805
(B) 1802
(C) 1806
(D) 1807
Correct Answer: (C) 1806

27. Mangal Pandey on sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry Stationed at Barrackpore killed Lieutenant on
(A) 21st March, 1857
(B) 29th March, 1857
(C) 23rd May, 1857
(D) 22nd June, 1857
Correct Answer: (B) 29th March, 1857

28. Mangal Pandey was executed on
(A) 2nd June, 1857
(B) 3rd May, 1855
(C) 4th May, 1844
(D) 9th May, 1857
Correct Answer: (D) 9th May, 1857

29. The revolt started at Dum Dum on
(A) 23rd January, 1857
(B) 22nd May, 1856
(C) 23rd June, 1844
(D) 30th July, 1832
Correct Answer: (A) 23rd January, 1857

30. Whom did rebels declare as Emperor of India?
(A) Shah Alam
(B) Faruq Shiar
(C) Bahadur Shah II
(D) Bahadur shah I
Correct Answer: (C) Bahadur Shah II

31. Who led the rebels in Bihar?
(A) Lazmi Bai
(B) Kunwar Singh
(C) Tantia Tope
(D) Nana Saheb
Correct Answer: (B) Kunwar Singh

32. The Governor General who brought the General service Enlistment Act, 1856
(A) Lord Curzon
(B) Lord Canning
(C) Lord Hastings
(D) Lord Minto
Correct Answer: (B) Lord Canning

33. Who led the revolt in Delhi?
(A) Kunwar Singh
(B) Ahmad Shah
(C) Laxmi Bai
(D) Bahadur shah II and General Bakht Khan
Correct Answer: (D) Bahadur shah II and General Bakht Khan

34. The statement that the revolt of 1857 was "neither the first, nor national, nor war of independence" was made by?
(A) V.D Savarkar
(B) S. N. Sen
(C) R. C Majumdar
(D) Benjamin Disraeli
Correct Answer: (C) R. C Majumdar

35. The ancient name of Assam is?
(A) Pawa
(B) Kamrup
(C) Pippalivan
(D) Ramgram
Correct Answer: (B) Kamrup

36. "Every Indian is corrupt". Who said?
(A) Lord Conwallis
(B) Lord Wellesley
(C) Lord Hastings
(D) Lord Dalhousie
Correct Answer: (C) Lord Hastings

37. Vellore Mutiny took place in the year of?
(A) 1764
(B) 1806
(C) 1857
(D) 1935
Correct Answer: (B) 1806

38. Jhansi and Gwalior were recovered by
(A) Sleeman
(B) Watson
(C) Hugh Rose
(D) Campbell
Correct Answer: (C) Hugh Rose

39. The Governor General who abolished the titles of Carnatic Nawab and Raja of Tanjore and refused pension to Nana Saheb
(A) Lord Dalhousie
40. Bahadur Shah was died in Rangoon in
(A) 1834
(B) 1862
(C) 1843
(D) 1854
Correct Answer: (B) 1862

41. Who was the adopted son of last Peshwa Baji Rao II?
(A) Nana Saheb
(B) Madhav Rao
(C) Raghunath Rao
(D) Narayana Rao
Correct Answer: (A) Nana Saheb

42. Which of the following was the main for our break of 1857 Revolt?
(A) Introduction of Enfield rifle
(B) Introduction of Doctrine of Laps
(C) Introduction of Subsidiary Alliance
(D) (A) and (B)
Correct Answer: (D) (A) and (B)

43. The viceroy who introduced Doctrine of Lapse?
(A) Lord Wellesley

44. What was the ratio of Indian soldiers and Europeans in the Army at the time of 1857 Revolt
(A) 5 : 1
(B) 4 : 2
(C) 6 : 1
(D) 7 : 2
Correct Answer: (C) 6 : 1

45. Banaras and Allahabad were recaptured by
(A) Neill
(B) Willson
(C) Hudson
(D) Campbell
Correct Answer: (A) Neill

46. Who was the founder of the Indian National Congress?
(A) Gopala Krishna Gokale
(B) Allen Octavian Hume
(C) Feroz Shah Mehta
(D) Bipin Chandra Pal
Correct Answer: (B) Allen Octavian Hume

Next Chapter: Religious and Social Reform Movements

Join our Official Telegram Channel: Click Here