

VISIONIAS
INSPIRING INNOVATION

QUICK REVISION MODULE
(UPSC PRELIMS 2024) MODERN INDIAN HISTORY
REVOLT OF 1857

REVOLT OF 1857



The Revolt of 1857 is a **watershed event** in history of India's struggle against the foreign rule. But it was no sudden occurrence rather it was the **culmination of a century long traditions of fierce popular resistance** to British domination in India.

Prior to this, the mutinies and rebellions remained sporadic or local affairs. However, the scale and spread of the Revolt of 1857 was larger. Sepoys at many centre mutinied and this was accompanied by civil disturbances.

CAUSES OF THE REVOLT

ECONOMIC CAUSES

- **Peasants** were impoverished by heavy taxation.
- **Moneylenders and traders** emerged as the new landlords.
- Annexation of cut off the source of patronage for **artisans and handicraftsmen.**
- Land rights **zamindars** were often forfeited with frequent use of a quo warranto.

POLITICAL CAUSES

- Policies such as **'Effective Control', 'Subsidiary Alliance' and 'Doctrine of Lapse'.**
- Annexation of **Awadh** in 1856 on the pretext of maladministration.
- Attempt to take away the nominal authority of the native Princes and their pensions were greatly reduced.
- **Satara (1848), Nagpur, Sambalpur and Baghat (1850), Udaipur (1852) and Jhansi (1853)** were annexed unsing Doctrine of Lapse.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CAUSES

- **Racial overtones and a superiority complex** of British and activities of **Christian missionaries.**
- **Socio-religious reform like** abolition of sati, widow remarriage and women's education.
- Government's decision to tax mosque and temple lands.
- **Legislative measures**, like Religious Disabilities Act, 1856 declared that change of religion did not debar a son from inheriting the property.

OTHER CAUSES

- **Administrative Causes:** Rampant corruption in the Company's administration.
- British suffered **serious losses** in 1st Afghan War (1838-42), Punjab War (1845-49), Crimean Wars (1854-56), Santhal rebellion (1855-57).
- **Immidiate Cause:** Discontent amoung the Indian Sepoys.





DISCONTENT AMONG SEPOYS

Restrictions on wearing caste and sectarian marks and rumors of **proselytizing activities** of chaplains.	**General Service Enlistment Act** decreed that all future recruits to the Bengal Army would have to give an undertaking to serve anywhere as might be required by the Government.	**Unequal emoluments** compared to his British counterpart and d**enial of Foreign Service allowance (bhatta)** when serving in Sind or in Punjab.	There had been a **long history of revolts** in the British Indian Army - Bengal (1764), Vellore (1806), Barrackpore (1825) and during the Afghan Wars (1838-42).

BEGINNING OF THE REVOLT

March 29, 1857
Mangal Pandey of **34th Native Infantry** killed Hugeson and Baugh on parade at Barakpore.



April 23, 1857
80 soldiers of the **3 Light Cavalry** who refused to use the cartridges were court martialled.

May 10, 1857
Mutiny started at Merrut

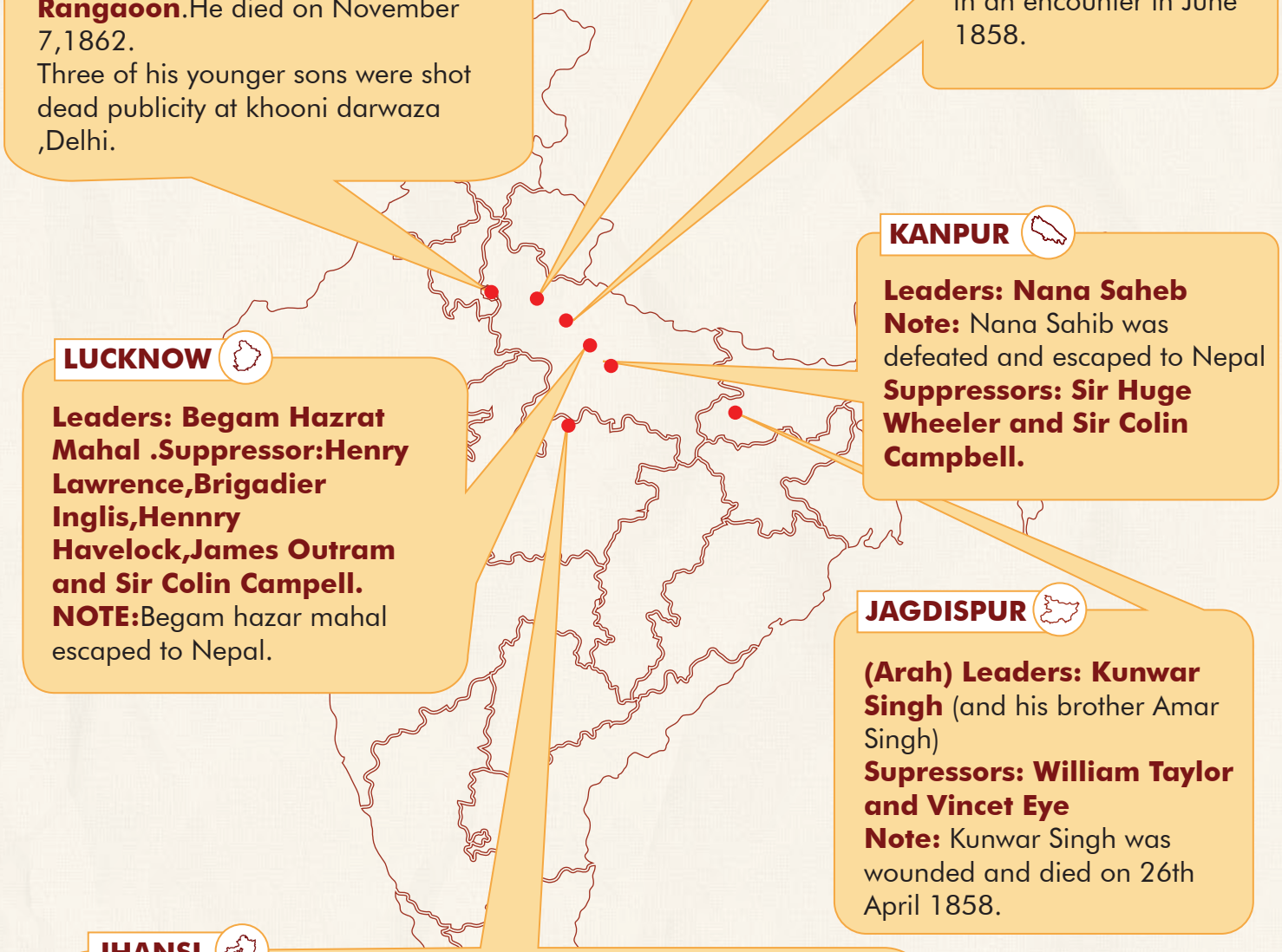
May 11,1857
Marching soldiers arrived in Delhi.
82 year old, Bahadur Shah Zafar was declared the Shahenshan-e-Hindustan (Emperor of the India).





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SPREAD OF THE REVOLT, ASSOCIATE LEADERS AND BRITISH SUPPRESSORS



DELHI

Leaders: Bahadur Shah|| 'Zafar and Gen Bakht Khan.
Suppressors: Archdale Wilson, Nicholson and Sir John Lawrence
Note: Bahadur Shah||surrendered and was exited with his favourite Queen zinnat MAHAL in **Rangaoon**.He died on November 7,1862.
Three of his younger sons were shot dead publicity at khooni darwaza ,Delhi.

BAREILLY

Leaders:Khan Bahadur.

FAIZABAD

Leaders: Maulvi Ahmadullah
Note: Ahmadullah killed in an encounter in June 1858.

KANPUR

Leaders: Nana Saheb
Note: Nana Sahib was defeated and escaped to Nepal
Suppressors: Sir Huge Wheeler and Sir Colin Campbell.

LUCKNOW

Leaders: Begam Hazrat Mahal .Suppressor:Henry Lawrence,Brigadier Inglis,Hennry Havelock,James Outram and Sir Colin Campell.
NOTE: Begam hazar mahal escaped to Nepal.

JAGDISPUR

(Arah) Leaders: Kunwar Singh (and his brother Amar Singh)
Supressors: William Taylor and Vincet Eye
Note: Kunwar Singh was wounded and died on 26th April 1858.

JHANSI

Leaders: Rani laxmibai
Suppressor: sir Hugh Rose
Note: she was joined by **Tantya Tope**, A close associate by Nana saheb,after the loss of kanpur.
She met her death on june 17,1858,during the **battle for Gwalior.**
Betrayed by a Zamindar friend, Tope was captured while sleeping and was sentenced tp death on April 15,1859.

OTHER LEADERS

Liyaqat Ali (Allahabad)	**Azimullah Khan (Fatehpur)**	**Devi Singh (Mathura)**	**Kadam Singh (Merrut)**	**Shah Mal (Baghpat)**

- **NOTE:** By the **end of 1859,** British authority over India was fully re-established:
  - British adopted the **policy of 'no prisoners',** which meant that the rebels were executed en masse. This British retaliation is called **'the Devil's Wind'.**
  - Large numbers of **rebels were tied to the mouth of the cannons and blown** to bits. Sometimes the entire pro-rebel villages were wiped out.

REASONS FOR FAILURE OF THE REVOLT

Lacked all India participation

The eastern, southern and western part of the country mostly remained unaffected. The revolt was mainly localised in central India.

Poor participation from all section of the society.

Educated Indians, money lenders, talukdars, and merchants didnot particpate in the revolt. Also, most of the Indian rulers refused to join. Example: Scindia of Gwalior, Holkars of Indore, etc.

Weak leadership with lack of coordination

The principal leaders, Nana Sahib, Tantya Tope, Kunwar Singh, and Laxmibai, were no match to their British opponents in generalships like Lawrence Brothers, John Nicholson, etc.

Indian Soldiers were poorly equipped materially

They fought generally with swords and spears and very few guns and muskets. Whereas, British troops were well trained and equipped with Enfield rifles and electric telegraph.

Other Resons

Punjab didn't rise in revolt because of which the British army deployed in large numbers in the region could be redeployed for tackling the rebels. Gurkha soldiers sided with the British.

CHANGES INTRODUCED AFTER THE SUPPRESSION OF THE REVOLT

English East India Company's rule came to an end. **Government of India Act, 1858**, declared Queen Victoria as the sovereign of British India.

Governor-General of India was given an additional title, the **Viceroy** and was a representative of the Crown.

Board of Directors and Board of Control were abolished and office of the **Secretary of State** for India was created who was assisted by an Indian Council of 15 members.

Indian Army was thoroughly reorganized. It had a higher proportion of Europeans in it and were responsible for manning the artillery and the field.

Concrete efforts were made to woo the **Native Princes** as allies. The policy of ruthless conquest in India was given up.

Administrative changes were made in the executive, legislative and judicial arenas with **greater participation of Indians.**

Unconditional pardon was granted to the rebels except those who had been responsible for the murder of the British during the revolt.

British actively pursued the policy of **"Divide and Rule"** towards the general population. British adopted a conservative attitude towards the Muslims.

SIGNIFICANCE OF REVOLT OF 1857

Voiced the grievances of various classes.

It acted as an **inspiration for later phase** of Indian freedom struggle.



It had **seeds of nationalism and anti- imperialism.** But the concept of common nationality and nationhood was not inherent to the revolt of 1857.

It was **written about and discussed not only within Indai but also outside** by Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx, etc.

It led to **reforms in Indian admistrative, legislative and executive setup.**

There was **complete cooperation between Hindus and Muslims** at all levels- people, soldiers, leaders.

HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

- **The events of 1857 demonstrated that the** India was not communal before 1858:
  - **Complete cooperation between Hindus and Muslims** at all the levels—people, soldiers, leaders.
  - All leaders acknowledged **Bahadur Shah Zafar, as the emperor.**
  - Rebels and sepoys, both Hindu and Muslim, respected each other's sentiments. For example: **immediate banning of cow slaughter.**
  - **Both Hindus and Muslims were well represented in leadership.** For example: Nana Saheb had Azimullah, an expert in political propaganda, as his aide. Similarly, Rani Laxmibai had the solid support of Afghan soldiers.

NATURE OF THE REVOLT

"The Indian War of Independence, 1857" - **V.D. Savarkar**	**Savarkar called the revolt as the first war of Indian independence. He interpreted it as a** "planned war of national independence".
"Eighteen FiftySeven" - **Dr S.N. Sen**	He considers the revolt as having begun as a fight for religion but ending as a war of independence.
Dr R.C. Majumdar	He considers it as **neither the first, nor national, nor a war of independence** as large parts of the country remained unaffected and many sections of the people took no part in the upsurge.
"Discovery of India" - **Jawaharlal Nehru**	He considered the revolt of 1857 as essentially a **feudal uprising though there were some nationalistic elements** in it.
M.N. Roy	He felt the revolt was a last ditch stand of feudalism against commercial capitalism.
R.P. Dutt	He saw it as **revolt of the peasantry against foreign domination.**
James Outram	"A Mohammedan conspiracy making capital of Hindu grievances"
S.B. Chaudhuri	The revolt was **"the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge a foreign power."**