



Mutiny Memorial tells the Story of 1857 Revolt

Prelims: Revolt of 1857, Leaders of revolt, Causes.

Mains: Causes and Impacts of revolt, Extent of mass Participation.

Why in News?

Mutiny Memorial (New Delhi) was initially **built in 1863 to honour those who fought from the British side** during the [Revolt of 1857](#) but 25 years after Independence, they **re-dedicated it to the memory of those Indians who lost their lives fighting the British.**

- The monument has an indifferent **gothic design** with arched marble-backed recesses on all sides of the octagonal tower.

What was the 1857 Revolt?

- Indian Revolt of 1857-59 was a widespread but **unsuccessful rebellion** against the rule of British East India Company in India during **Governor General Canning's** regime.
- It was the **first expression of organised resistance against the company** led by sepoys of the company, eventually securing the **participation of the masses.**
- The rebellion of 1857 is referred to by various names, including the **Sepoy Mutiny** (according to British historians), **the Indian Mutiny, the Great Rebellion** (according to Indian historians), **the Indian Insurrection, and the First War of Independence** (as per Vinayak Damodar Savarkar).

What were the Causes?

- **Immediate Causes:**
 - **Greased Cartridges:** The Revolt of 1857 was triggered by the use of new **Enfield rifles whose cartridges were believed to be greased with cow and pig fat**, leading to the refusal of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys to use them.
 - **Repression of Grievances:** **Mangal Pandey's refusal to use the cartridges in Barrackpore and subsequent hanging**, along with the **imprisonment of 85 soldiers in Meerut** for similar refusal, were among the incidents that sparked the Revolt of 1857 in India.
- **Political Causes:**
 - [Doctrine of Lapse](#): The political causes of the revolt were the British policy of expansion through the **Doctrine of Lapse** and direct annexation.
 - The dislodgement of number of Indian rulers and chiefs and annexations including **annexations of Satara, Nagpur, Jhansi, Jaitpur, Sambalpur, Udaipur and Awadh** led to growing discontent against the Policy of expansion. Further many **nobles, officials and soldiers were left jobless.**
- **Social and Religious Causes:**
 - **Spread of Western Civilization:** The rapidly **spreading Western Civilisation** in India was alarming concerns all over the country.

- An act in 1850 **changed the Hindu law of inheritance** enabling a Hindu who had converted into Christianity to inherit his ancestral properties, which was **seen as an attempt to convert Indians to Christianity**
- Even the introduction of the railways and telegraph was viewed with suspicion.
- **Challenge to Orthodoxy:** The **abolition of practices like sati and female infanticide**, introduction of western education and the legislation legalizing widow remarriage, were believed as **threats to the established social structure**.
- **Economic Causes:**
 - **Heavy Taxes:** Peasants and zamindars, both were infuriated by the **heavy taxes on land** and the **stringent methods of revenue collection**, often leading to **loss of ancestral land**.
 - **Grievances of Sepoys:** Large numbers of **sepoys belonged to the peasantry** class and had family ties in villages, so the grievances of the peasants also affected them.
 - **Ruins of Local Industry and Handicrafts:** After the Industrial Revolution in England, there was an **influx of British manufactured goods** into India, which ruined industries, particularly the textile industry and handicrafts of India.
- **Military Causes:**
 - **Unequal Remuneration:** Indian sepoys formed more than 87% of the British troops in India but were **considered inferior to British soldiers** and **paid less** than European counterparts.
 - **Posting In Far Areas:** They were required to serve in areas far away from their homes and across the seas. Crossing the sea was seen by many as losing the caste.

Who were the Leaders of Revolt?

Places of Revolt	Indian Leaders	British Officials who suppressed the revolt
Delhi	Bahadur Shah II	John Nicholson
Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal	Henry Lawrence
Kanpur	Nana Saheb	Sir Colin Campbell
Jhansi & Gwalior	Lakshmi Bai & Tantia Tope	General Hugh Rose
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan	Sir Colin Campbell
Allahabad and Banaras	Maulvi Liyakat Ali	Colonel Ocell
Bihar	Kunwar Singh	William Taylor

What was the British Response?

- The Revolt of 1857 lasted for more than a year. It was **suppressed by the middle of 1858 through severe repression**.
- On July 8, 1858, fourteen months after the outbreak at Meerut, peace was finally proclaimed by Lord Canning.

Why did the Revolt Fail?

- **Limited Uprising:** Although the revolt was fairly widespread, a large part of the country remained unaffected by it.
 - The Southern provinces and the large princely states, **Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, and Kashmir**, as well as the smaller ones of **Rajputana** did not join the rebellion
- **No Effective Leadership:** The rebels lacked an effective leader. Although Nana Saheb, Tantia Tope and Rani Lakshmi Bai were brave leaders, they **could not offer effective coordinated leadership** to the movement.
- **Limited Resources:** The rebels lacked resources in terms of men and money. The English, on the other hand, received a steady supply of men, money and arms in India.
- **No Participation of the Middle Class:** The English educated middle class, the rich merchants, traders and zamindars of Bengal helped the British to suppress the revolt.

What were the Impacts of the Revolt?

- **Direct Rule of the British Crown:** The Government of India Act, 1858, ended company rule in India and brought it under the direct rule of the British Crown.
 - **The India office** was created to handle the governance and the administration of the country.
- **Religious Tolerance:** It was promised, and due attention was paid to the customs and traditions of India. British support to religious reforms took a backseat.
- **Administrative Change:** The Governor General's office was replaced by that of the **Viceroy**.
 - The rights of Indian rulers were recognised.
 - The **Doctrine of Lapse was abolished**.
 - The right to adopt sons as legal heirs was accepted.
- **Military Reorganisation:** The ratio of British officers to Indian soldiers increased but the armoury remained in the hands of the English.

Conclusion

The uprising of 1857 was a remarkable occurrence in the British era India. **Despite failing in accomplishing its intended objective, it laid the foundation for Indian nationalism** and brought together various segments of society to a certain extent.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q.1 What was/were the object/objects of Queen Victoria's Proclamation (1858)? (2014)

1. To disclaim any intention to annex 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 using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

- To allay the fears of Princely States and to break the support group (i.e., dissatisfied Princely Rulers) of rebel sepoys – 1858 proclamation clarified the British position in relation to the Princely States. The proclamation denied any intention to annex Indian States. **Hence, 1 is correct.**
- The proclamation of 1858 abolished the rule of the East India Company and placed the Indian administration under the British Crown. **Hence, 2 is correct.**
- Proclamation sought to end the English East Company's rule and establish a direct control of the British Crown (i.e., British Parliament). **Hence, 3 is not correct. Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Q.2 With reference to the history of India, "Ulgulan" or the Great Tumult is the description of which of the following events? (2020)

- (a) The Revolt of 1857
- (b) The Mappila Rebellion of 1921
- (c) The Indigo Revolt of 1859-60

(d) Birsa Munda's Revolt of 1899-1900

Ans: (d)

- Birsa Munda (1875-1900) was born in the Munda tribe which inhabited the Chotanagpur area Bengal Presidency (Present-day Jharkhand). He is often referred to as 'Dharti Abba' or the Earth Father.
- Birsa Munda led the rebellion that came to be known as Ulgulan (revolt) or the Munda rebellion against the British government-imposed feudal state system. **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q.1 Explain how the Uprising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India. **(2016)**

Q.2 Defying the barriers of age, gender and religion, the Indian women became the torch bearer during the struggle for freedom in India. Discuss. **(2013)**

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