

INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The uprising, which seriously threatened British rule in India, has been called by many names by historians, including the Sepoy Rebellion, the Great Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857; however, many prefer call it India's first war of independence. Undoubtedly, it was the culmination of mourning Indian resentment toward, British economic and social policies over many decades. Until the rebellion the British had succeeded in suppressing numerous and 'tribal' wars or in accommodating them through concessions till the Great Mutiny in the summer of 1857 during the viceroyalty of Lord Canning.

Important Leaders Connected with the Revolt

The heroine of this war of independence was Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi who died on 17 June 1858, while fighting the British forces. Other notable leaders were Ahmadullah of Awadh, Nana Sahob of Konpur and his loyal commander Tantia Tope, Rao Singh, Azimullah Khan, Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur, Firuz Shah, Maulwi Ahmed Shah of Firozabad; the Begum of Awadh (Hazrat Mahal), Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly and Maulawi Ahmadullah of Faizabad. The nominal leader of the revolt, Bahadur Shah II, and General Bakht Khan, who led the revolt of sepoys at Delhi have their own places in the history of 1857 revolt. Supporters of the English in the revolt were, the Mumbai and Chennai armies that remained loyal to them; the Rojas of Patiala, Jind, Gwalior, Hyderabad and Nepal helped them to suppress the revolt.

The Beginning of the Revolt

On 29 March 1857, an Indian sepoy of the 34 Regiment, Mangal Pandey, killed two British

officers on parade at Barrackpore. The Indian soldiers present then refused to obey orders and arrest Mangal Pandey. However, he was arrested later on, tried and hanged. The news spread like wildfire to all cantonments in the country and very soon a countrywide sepoy revolt broke out in Lucknow, Ambala, Berhampur and Meerut.

On 10 May 1857, soldiers at Meerut refused to touch the new Enfield rifle cartridges. The soldiers, along with other civilians, went on a rampage shouting maro firangi ko. They broke open jails, murdered European men and women, burnt their houses and marched to Delhi. Next morning, in Delhi the soldiers signalled the local soldiers by marching, who in turn revolted, seized the city and proclaimed the 80-year-old Bahadur Shah Zafar, as the Emperor of India.

Popular Movements And Revolts Upto 1857

Year	Movement/Mutiny
1764	Mutiny of sepoys in Bengal
1766	Chuar and Ro rising in Chhotanogpur and Singbhum regions where the Chaur.He and Munda tribes revolted till 1772 due to famine, enhanced demands and economic privation
1770	Sanyasi Revolt
1806	Vellore Mutiny
1817	Bhil movement in the Western Ghats
1822	Romosi rising under the leadership of Chittar Singh
1824	Mutiny of sepoys of the 47th Regiment at Barrackpore
1828	Ahams Revolt against the company for non-fulfilment of pledges after the Burmese War 1829. First Koli rising against dismantling of forts of independent Koli tribes
1831	Kol rising of Chhotanagpur against the

	transfer of land from heads of Kol tribesmen to outsiders
1833	Khasi Rising in the hilly region of Jaintia and Garohills. The revolt was lead by Tirath Singh, the ruler of Nunklow and resented by Khasis in the region
1838	FARAIZI Movement under the leadership of Titu Mirit later merged into the Wahabi Movement
1839	Second Koli rising
1844	Third Koli rising
1844	Surat Salt Agitation against raised salt duty
1844	Mutiny of the 34th Native Infantry
1844	Kolhapur and Savantvadi Revolts
1849	Mutiny of the 22nd Native Infantry
1850	Mutiny of the 66th Native Infantry
1852	Mutiny of the 37th Native Infantry
1855	Santhal rebellion in the Rajmahal hills region of Bihar
1857	Revolt of sepoys of 3rd Cavalry at Meerut and later mutinies in Punjab, Mathura, Lucknow, Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Kanpur, Banaras, Jhansi, Allahabad and many other places in North India

Within a month of the capture of Delhi, the revolt spread to different parts of the country: Kanpur, Lucknow, Banaras, Allahabad, Bareilly, Jagdishpur and Jhansi. In the absence of any leader from their own ranks, the insurgents turned to traditional leaders of Indian society. At Kanpur, Nana Saheb - the adopted son of last Peshwa, Baji Rao II - led the forces. Rani Lakshmi Bai in Jhansi, Begum Hazrat Mahal in Lucknow and Khan Bahadur in Bareilly were the others in command. However, apart from a commonly shared hatred for alien rule, the rebels had no political perspective or a definite vision of the future. They were all prisoners of their own past, fighting primarily to regain their lost privileges.

Unsurprisingly, they proved incapable of ushering in a new political order, John Lawrence rightly remarked that had a single leader of ability arisen among them (the rebels) we would have been lost beyond redemption'.



Failure of The Revolt

The rebels were dealt a powerful blow when the British captured Delhi on 20 September 1857 and imprisoned Emperor Bahadur Shah. The British military then dealt with the rebels in each centre, by term. The Rani of Jhansi died fighting on 17 June 1858. Nana Saheb refused to give in and finally escaped to Nepal in January 1859, hoping to renew the struggle, Kunwar Singh died in May 1858, trying to escape from the British, and Tantia Tape, who successfully carried out guerrilla warfare against the British until April 1859, was betrayed by a fellow rebel and was captured and put to death by the British, thus re-establishing British authority over India.

Causes of Failure of the Revolt

- (i) Disunity of Indians and poor organization.
- (ii) Lack of complete nationalism - Scindia, Holkors, the Nizam and others actively helped the British.
- (iii) Lack of coordination between sepoys, peasants, zamindars and other classes.
- (iv) All participants had different motives for participating in the revolt.

Spread of the Revolt

The rebellion soon engulfed much of North India, including Awadh and various areas that were once under the control of Maratha princes. The capture of Delhi and the proclamation of Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of Hindustan (Shahenshah-e-Hindustan) gave a positive, meaning to the revolt and provided a rallying point for the rebels by recalling the past glory of the imperial city. The revolt at Meerut and the capture of Delhi were the precursors to a widespread mutiny by the sepoys and rebellion almost, over North India, as well as in central and western parts of the country. The south remained quiet and Punjab and Bengal were only marginally affected. Almost half company's sepoy strength of 2,32,224 opted out of loyalty to their regimental colours and overcame the ideology of the army,

which had been meticulously constructed over a period of time through discipline. Isolated mutinies also occurred at military posts in the centre of the subcontinent. Initially, the rebels, although divided and uncoordinated, gained the upper hand, while the unprepared British were terrified, and even paralysed, without replacements for the casualties. The Result of 1857, an unsuccessful but heroic effort to eliminate foreign rule, had begun. The civil war inflicted havoc on both the Indians and the British as each exited its fury on the other, each community suffered humiliation and triumph in battle as well, although the final outcome was victory for the British. The last major sepoy rebels surrendered on 21 June 1858, at Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh), one of the principal centres of the revolt. A final battle was fought at Sirwa Pass on 21 May 1859 and the defeated rebels fled to Nepal.

The spontaneous and widespread rebellion later fired the imagination of the nationalists who would debate the most effective method of protest against the British rule. For them; the rebellion represented the first Indian attempt at gaining independence. This interpretation, however, is open to serious question.

Significance of the Revolt

The important element in the revolt lays in Hindu-Muslim unity. People exhibited patriotic sentiment without the touch of communal feelings. All rebels, irrespective of their religion, recognized Bahadur Shah as their emperor. It no doubt began as a mutiny of soldiers but soon turned into a revolt against the British rule in general.

SUBLTERN MOVEMENTS OF NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

TABLE 3.1 Tribal Movements in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Name of the Movement	Area Affected	Year	Leader(s)	Course of the Movement and Consequence
Chuars	Nanbhum and Barabhum (West Bengal)	1768, 1832	Not available	Defiance of the British authority by Chuars; suppression of the revolt by the British through use of force as well as conciliatory measures
Bhils	Khandesh (Maharashtra)	1818, 1848	Not available	Beginning of revolt of Bhils with the British occupation of khandesh and their defiance of the British for 30 years; final suppression through military operations combined with conciliatory measures
Hos	Singhbhum and Chota Nagpur	1820, 1822, 1832	Not available	Occupation of Singhbhum by the British and revolt of the Hos, its suppression after extensive military operations; their revolt again in 1832
Kolis	Sahyadri Hills (Gujarat and Maharashtra)	1824, 1828, 1839, and 1844-1848	Not available	Repeated revolts of kolis and their final suppression after the capture of all their leaders
Khasis	Khasi Hills (Assam and Meghalaya)	1829-1832	Tirut Singh and Bar Manik (Chiefs of Nounklow and Molim, respectively)	Unsuccessful attempts of the khasis to drive away the British from their territory
Singphos	Assam	1830-1839	Not available	Suppression of 1830 revolt by Captain Neufville; murder of Colonel While (British political Agent of Assam) by Singphos in 1839 but ultimately defeated by the British
Kols	Chota Nagpur (Jharkand)	1831-1832	Buddoo Bhagat	Suppression of the revolt after extensive military operations by the British and death
Koyas	Rampa Region (Chodavarn in Andra Pradesh)	1840, 1845, 1848, 1861-1862, 1879-1880	Alluri Sitaramaraju	Repeated revolts of the koyas the major ones being the 1879-1880 and 1922-1924 revolts; capture and execution of Raju by the British in May 1924
Khonds	Khondmals (Orissa)	1846-1848	Chakra Bisayi	The first two revolts led by Bisayi were suppressed with great difficulty by the British
Santhals	Rajmahal	1855-1856	Sidhu and	Revolt of Santhals and establishment of their own

	Hills (Bihar)		Kanhu	government (July 1855); defeat of the British under Major Burrough by Santhals transfer of the disturbed area to the military and final suppression of the revolt by the end of 1856: creation of separate district of Santhal Paragans to prevent Santhals from revolting again in future
Naikdas	Panch Mahals (Gujarat)	1858-1859, 1868	Rupsing and Joria Bhagat	Revolt of Naikdas under Rupsingh in 1858 and conclusion of peace between the British and Rupsing in 1859; their revolt again in 1868 and establishment of a kingdom with Joria as the spiritual head and Rupsing as temporal head; suppression of the revolt after the capture and execution of Rupsing and Joria
Kacha Nagas Mundas	Cacher (Assam) Chota Nagpur	1882, 1899-1900	Sambhudan Birsa Munda	Foundation of a new religious sect by Birsa, with Singh Bonga as the only true God. The British fears over Birsa's preachings among Mundas and arrest and imprisonment of Birsa. Release of Birsa and revival of his doctrine; revolt of Mundas and their attack on churches and police stations (1899); defeat of Mundas by the British (jan 1900), and capture of Birsa (he died of cholera in jail in June 1900)
Bhils	Banswara and Dungapur (southern Rajasthan)		Govind Guru	It began as a purification movement but later developed into a political movement; failure of their attempts to set up a Bhil Raj due to British armed intervention
Oraons	Chotanagpur	1913	Jatra Bhagat	
Thadoe Kukis	Manipur	1914-1718	Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu	1917-1719

TABLE 3.2 Caste and Peasant Movements

Name	Year	Area	Leader
Nair Movement	1891-1919	Travancore	C. V. Raman Pillai and K. Ramakrishna Pillai
Nadar Movement	1910	Tamil Nadu	-
Justice Movement	1915-1916	Sounth India	C. N. Mudaliyar, T. M. Nair and P. T. Chetti
Self Respect Movement	1925	Tamil Nadu	E. V. Ramaswami Naicker (Periya)
Ezhava Movement	1928	Kerala	Nanu Asan (Narayan Guru)
Satyashodhak Movement	1872	Maharashtra	Jyotiba Phule
Mahar Movement	1920	Maharashtra	B. R. Amberkar
Kaivartas	1897	Midnapur (Bengal)	NA
Namshudras	1901	Faridpur (Bengal)	NA
Indigo Movement	1859-1860	Bengal	Dina Bandhu Mitra
Pabna Movement	1872-1885	East Bengal	Keshab Chandra Roy and Sambhunath Pal
Deccan Riots	1875	Maharashtra	

Punjab Peasant Movement	1890-1900	Punjab	-
Champaran Movement	1917	Bihar	Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, A. N. Sinha, J. B. Kriplani, Mazhar-ul Haq and Mahadev Desai

TABLE 3.3 Non-Tribal Movement

Name the Movement	Area affected	Year	Leader(s)	Main Cause(s)	Course of the Movement and Consequence
Revolt of Kattabomman	Tirunelveli	1792-1799	Veerapandya Kattabomman (Ruler of Panchalakurichi)	Attempts of the British to force Kattabomman to accept their suzerainty and his refusal. British occupation of Orissa. (1803); resentment of, the Paiks (a militia class occupying rent-free lands 'under the zamindars) against British land and land revenue policies	Defiance of the British by Kattabomman for 7 years; his final capture and execution by the British (1799); annexation of his territory by the British (1799)
Rebellion of the Paiks	Orissa	1804-1806	First under the Raja of Khurda and later under Jagabandhu	The British occupation of Orissa (1803); resentment of the Paiks (a militia class occupying rent-free lands under the zamindars) against the British land revenue policies	Unsuccessful attempt of the Raja of Khurda to organise a rebellion with the help of the Paiks and confiscation of his territory by the British (1804); continuous unrest among the Paiks between 1804 and 1806; rise of the Paiks under Jaga-bandhu and their occupation of puri after defeating the British force (1817); final suppression of the movement by force and conciliatory measure by the British
Revolt of	Travancore	1808-	Velu Thambi	Financial burden	Beginning of the war between the

Velu Thambi		1809	(Diwan of Travancore)	imposed on the state by the British through the subsidiary system; the high handedness of the British resident there and the British demand for the removal of Dewan	two sides (December 1808); fall of Trivandrum (capital of Travancore) to the British (February 1809); death of Velu Thambi in forest due to serious injuries
Revolt of Rao Bharmal	Kutch and Kathiawar	1861-1819	Rao Bharmal (ruler of Kutch)	Anti-British feeling due to the British expansionist policy and their interference in internal affairs of Kutch	Final defeat and deposal of Rao Bharmal; imposition of Subsidiary Treaty on Kutch
Revolt of Ramosis	Poona	1822-1829	Chittur Singh and Umaji	The British annexation of Peshwa's territory (1818), resulting in large-scale unemployment among Ramosis (under the Peshwa, they served in lower ranks of police)	Revolt of the Ramosis under Chittur Singh (1822-24); establishment of peace by the British by pardoning all the crimes of the Ramosis and granting them lands and recruiting them as hill police
Kittur Rising	Kittur (near Dharwar in Karnataka)	1824-1829	Channamma and Rayappa	Death of Shjivalinga Rudra Desai (chief) of Kittur (1824), leaving no male to recognize the adopted issue; refusal of the British to accept the son as the Desai and	Revolt of Channamma (widow of late Desai) in 1824 and murder of the English officers including Thackeray (collector of Dharwar); conquest of Kittur and its annexation by the British. Revolt of the people of Kittur under Rayappa who declared independence set up the adopted boy as the Desai (1829); capture and execution of Rayappa by the British and death of Channamma

				assumption of administration of Kittur by the British	in Dharwar prison.
Sambalpur Outbreaks	Sambalpur (Orissa)	1827-1840	Surendra Sai	Frequent interference of the British in the internal affairs of Sambalpur. such as the issue of succession	Death of Maharaja Sai (ruler) and outbreak of civil war, succession of Mohan Kumari (widow of the late Raja) with die support of the British and revolt of other claimants under Surendra Sai; final imprisonment of Surendra Sai by British (1840)
Satara Disturbances	Satar (Maharashtra)	1840-1841	Dhar Rao Pawar and Narsing Dattatreya Patkar	Deposal and banishment of Praiap Singh, the popular ruler of Satara by the British	Revolt of the people of Satara under Dhar Rao in 1840, their revolt under Narsing and seizure of Badami in 1841; defeat and capture of Narsing by the British (he was transported for life)
Bundela revolt	Sagar and Damoh (Bundelkhand)	1842	Madhukar Sha and Jawahir Singh	Resentment against the Brftish land revenue policy	Revolt of the Bundelas under Shah and Singh; murder of police officers and disruption of the British administration; capture and execution of Madhukar Shah and Singh by the British
Gadkari rebellion	Kolhapur (Maharashtra)	1844-1845	Not available	Assumption of direct administration of kolhapur by British and reforms of D. K. Pandit, resentment of the Gadkaris (a militia class who had earlier held revenue-free lands in return for their services to the ruler) against the revenue reforms	Revolt of the Gadkaris followed by a popular revolt in the city of kolhapur and all other parts of the state of kolhapur; final suppression of the movement by the British
Satavandi Revolt	Satavandi (Maharashtra)	1839-1845	Phond Savant (leading noble and Anna Sahib)	Deposal of Khen Savant (ruler of satavancli) and	

			(heir apparent)	appointment of a British officer to administer the state; resentment of the people against the British system of administration	
Raju rebellion	Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)	1827-1833	Birabhadra Raju	Birabhadra was disposed of his estate by the British in return for a small amount of pension	Revolt of Birabhadra and his defiance of the British authority till he was captured
Palakonda Outbreak	Palakonda (Andhra Pradesh)	1831-1832	Zamindar of Palakonda	Attachment of the property of zamindar for non-payment of revenue as he failed to clear the arrears of revenues to the British	Revolt of the zamindar, suppression of the revolt and forfeiture of Palakonda estate to the British
Parlakimedi Outbreak	Parlakimedi (Orissa)	1829-1835	Jagannath Gajapati Narayan Rao	Attachment of his zamindari for failure to clear the arrears by the British in 1827	Revolt of the zamindar, appointment of Mr Russel as the commissioner, final suppression of the movement after large-scale military campaign in 1837 Revolt of the zamindar followed by a popular rising of the people; final suppression of the movement

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