

HISTORY

Chapter 5: When People Rebel



When People Rebel

Reasons for the Revolt of 1857

The revolt of 1857 shook the foundations of the British rule in India. The revolt took place because of numerous reasons. Some reasons for the revolt were

Loss of Power of the Nawabs and the Kings

- After the advent of the British, the powers and the influence of the kings and the nawabs declined. British residents were placed in their courts, their army was disbanded, and their territories were annexed on one pretext or the other.
- Because of the Doctrine of Lapse, many states such as Jhansi, Satara and Nagpur were annexed by the Company. The rulers of these kingdoms, such as Rani Laxmibai, thus rose in revolt against the Company.
- Awadh was annexed in 1856 on the basis of maladministration.
- The name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins which were minted by the Company. Lord Canning declared Bahadur Shah Zafar as the last king of the Mughal dynasty. He announced that none of his descendants would be recognised as kings; rather, they would only be called princes.

The Resentment of the Peasants and the Sepoys

- The peasants and the zamindars disliked the imposition of high taxes and rigid methods of revenue collection by the Company officials.
- Many peasants took cash loans from the moneylenders at high rates of interest in order to pay revenues. Most of them lost their lands as they were not able to repay the loan.
- The sepoys in the Indian army were dissatisfied with their low pay, allowances, and conditions of service.
- The Company passed a new law in 1856, according to which a sepoy had to travel overseas whenever required by the Company. It was believed by the Hindus that one could lose his caste status and religion if he crosses the seas.
- As the family members of most sepoys were peasants, they were moved by the plight of the peasants.

Response to Reforms

- The British believed that Indian society was backward and needed to be reformed.
- The British passed a law banning the practice of 'sati'. They also encouraged widow remarriage.
- In 1850, a new law was passed according to which an Indian who had converted to

Christianity could inherit the property of his ancestors.

- Because of these reasons, Indians began to feel that the British were trying to defame their religious and social customs.

Immediate Cause of the Revolt

The British had introduced a new 'Enfield Rifle' in the army. This rifle needed a cartridge which had a greased paper cover. This paper cover had to be bitten off before loading the cartridge into the rifle. Rumours spread that the greased paper was made of beef and pork. The soldiers felt that it was a move by the British to defame their religion. Mangal Pandey urged his fellow soldiers not to use the rifle. On 29 March 1857, he attacked his officers in Barrackpore. He was later hanged. On 9 May 1857, 85 Indian soldiers who had refused to use the greased cartridge were dismissed from their services and were jailed for disobeying their officers. This marked the beginning of the sepoy revolt in Meerut which later spread to other parts of northern India.



Mangal Pandey

Events of the Rebellion

- On 10 May, the sepoys in Meerut revolted. They released the imprisoned sepoys and attacked and killed the British officers. They looted the guns and the ammunition and set the building on fire.
- The soldiers of Meerut travelled and reached Delhi where the regiments of Indian soldiers also rose in rebellion and killed their British officers.
- The sepoys then gathered around the Red Fort and urged the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to assume the leadership of the revolt. Many chieftains and small rulers threatened by the expansionist policies of the British believed that they would be able to rule their territories freely under the Mughal authority.
- Soon, the news of the revolt spread to other parts of northern India and the Indian

sepoys revolted in Kanpur and Lucknow.

Leaders of the Revolt

- **Nana Sahib**, the son of Peshwa Baji Rao, gathered armed forces and expelled the British garrison. He declared himself to be the Peshwa.
- **Begum Hazarat Mahal**, the wife of the deposed Nawab of Awadh Wajid Ali Shah, actively participated in the revolt. Her son **Birjis Qadr** was declared as the Nawab of Awadh.
- **Rani Laxmibai** of Jhansi joined the sepoys and fought against the British along with **Tantia Tope**.
- **Rani Avantibai Lodhi** of Ramgarh in the Mandla region of Madhya Pradesh fought against the British which had taken over the administration of her state.
- In the course of the revolt, the Indian sepoys had outnumbered the British officials. Many new leaders took charge of the revolt. For example, **Ahmadullah Shah**, a Maulvi, came to Lucknow with his supporters to fight the British.
- Similarly, **General Bakht Khan** from Bareilly took the leadership of the sepoys who had come to Delhi to fight against the British.
- In Kanpur, **Kunwar Singh** joined the sepoys in their fight against the British.



Rani Laxmibai was one of the leading figures of the Indian rebellion which broke out in 1857.

Repression of the Revolt

- After receiving reinforcements from England, the East India Company began to recapture the lost states. They also passed many laws which helped them to convict and sentence the rebels to death.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar was convicted and was sent to prison in Rangoon. His sons and

grandsons were shot dead.

- It took two years for the British to suppress the popular rebellion. Lucknow was recaptured in March 1858 and Laxmibai of Jhansi was defeated and killed in June 1858.
- After being surrounded by British troops, Rani Avantibai chose to die.
- Tantia Tope had escaped to the forested regions of Central India. He was later captured and killed in April 1859.
- The British tried to win the loyalties of the people by announcing rewards for the zamindars who had remained loyal to the British during the revolt.
- Many sepoys, zamindars, rebels, nawabs and rajas who had participated in the revolt were tried and hanged.

Consequences of the Revolt

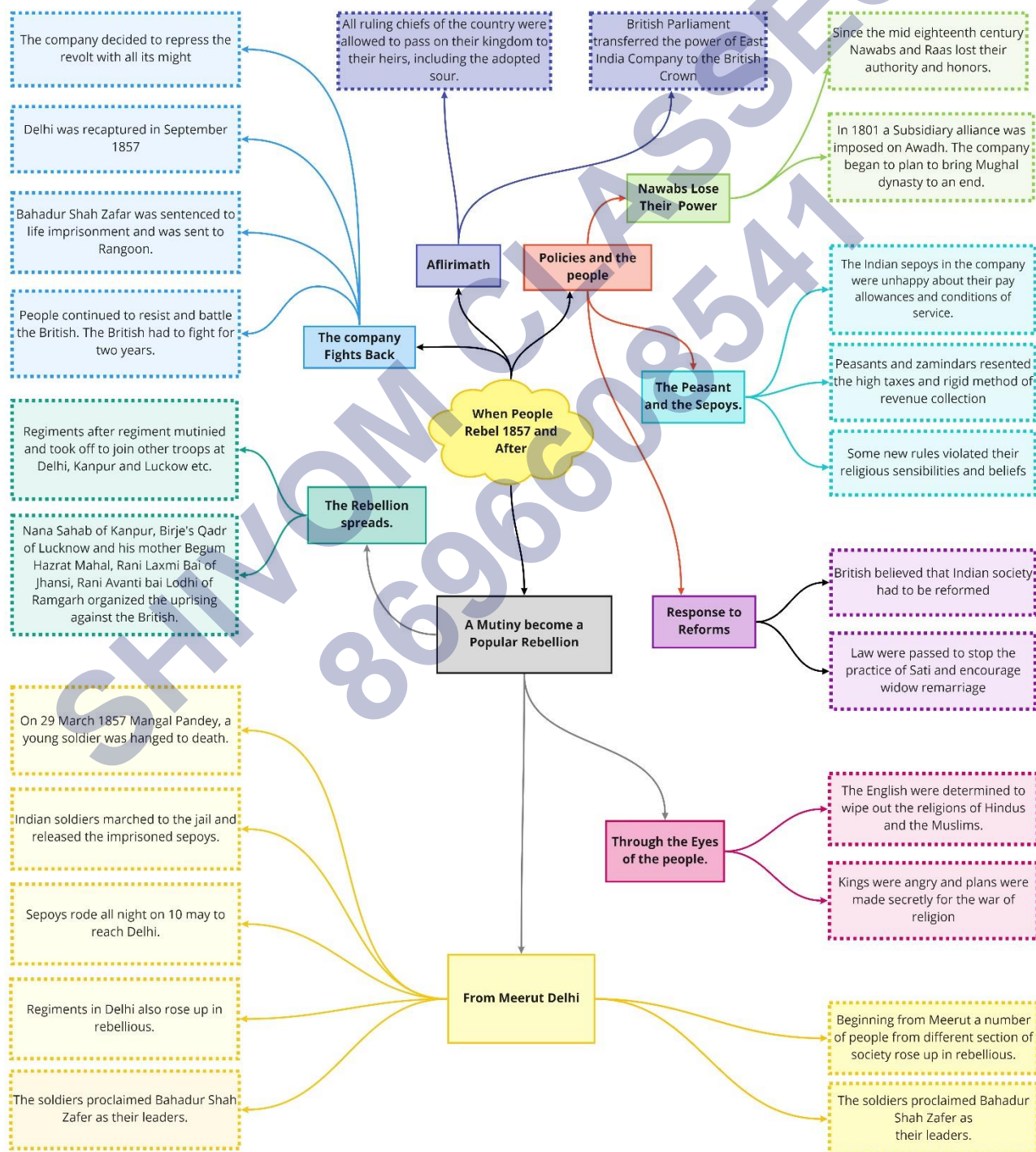
- An Act of 1858 was passed in the British Parliament which ended the rule of the East India Company and established the rule of the British crown over the Indian territories to ensure smooth management of Indian affairs.
- A British cabinet member was appointed as the Secretary of State for India. He was responsible for all matters which were concerned with the governance of the country.
- The Governor General was now called the Viceroy. Through these measures, the British Government accepted the direct responsibility for ruling India.
- The British Government assured all the ruling chiefs of the country that their lands would not be indiscriminately taken away. They were also allowed to pass on their kingdoms to their adopted sons.
- However, the Indian rulers had to accept Queen Victoria as the paramount power and had to work as subordinates of the British Crown.
- It was decided to reduce the number of Indian soldiers and increase the number of European soldiers in the Indian army.
- Because the Sikh, Gurukhas and Pathan soldiers had helped the British in suppressing the rebellion, the British decided to recruit them in large numbers in the Indian army.
- The British decided to respect the religious, social and cultural practices of the Indians.
- Policies were formulated to protect the interests of zamindars and landlords.



After the revolt of 1857, the control of Indian territories was transferred from the Company to the Crown.

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Class : 8th Social Studies (History)
Chapter 5 When People Rebel 1857 and After



Important Questions

Multiple Choice Questions-

1. Name the rebel who taught guerilla war against British with support of several peasant leaders:
 - a. Tantia Tope
 - b. Mangal Pandey
 - c. Bahadur Shah
 - d. Nana Saheb
2. Name the son of Begum Hazart Mahal from Lucknow
 - a. Birjis Qadr
 - b. Nana Saheb
 - c. Kunwar Singh
 - d. Baji Rao
3. The place where Bahadur Shah Zafar was sent under the life imprisonment sentence by the British.
 - a. Lucknow
 - b. Meerut
 - c. Delhi
 - d. Rangoon.
4. Who wanted to recognise his/her adopted son as the heir of his/her Jhansi kingdom?
 - a. Nana Saheb
 - b. Kunwar Singh
 - c. Birjis Qadr
 - d. Rani Lakshmibai
5. Who was proclaimed leader of the Revolt of 1857 from Mughal Empire?
 - a. Tantia Tope
 - b. Kunwar Singh
 - c. Bahadur Shah Zafar
 - d. Nana Saheb

6. Who was Nana Saheb?
 - a. Son of Peshwa Baji Rao II
 - b. Son of Rani Lakshmi Bai
 - c. Son of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah
 - d. None of these
7. What do you mean by Sepoy?
 - a. Tribals
 - b. Peasant
 - c. Soldier
 - d. None of these
8. Which revolt is led by Nana Saheb the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II?
 - a. Kanpur
 - b. Awadh
 - c. Jagdishpur
 - d. Bithur
9. The greased cartridges given to the Indian soldiers was made of what?
 - a. Fat of the hen
 - b. Fat of the dog
 - c. Fat of the goat and the sheep
 - d. Fat of cow and pig
10. Who was the Indian rulers under the Doctrine of Lapse introduced by Lord Dalhousie?
 - a. They are not allowed to go out of their states.
 - b. They could not have relations with foreign powers.
 - c. They are not allowed to adopt an heir to the throne.
 - d. could not keep an army.
11. When did Gangadhar Rao died?
 - a. 1864
 - b. 1845
 - c. 1834
 - d. 1853

12. When did the revolt of Meerut break out?

- a. 1863
- b. 1825
- c. 1874
- d. 1857

13. Who led the Revolt in Awadh?

- a. Zinat Mahal
- b. Lakshmibai
- c. Hazrat Mahal
- d. None of these

14. When was Gwalior recaptured by British?

- a. 1863
- b. 1842
- c. 1825
- d. 1858

15. Who was Gangadhar Rao?

- a. king of Banaras
- b. King of Jhansi
- c. King of Mewar
- d. None of these

Very Short:

1. What was the plea of Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao-II?
2. What was the first step taken by the Company towards ending the Mughal dynasty?
3. Why were the Indian sepoys unhappy with the British rule? Give any one reason.
4. What rumour spread among the sepoys of the Meerut regiment about the new cartridges?
5. What did the ageing Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar do after he was declared the leader of the rebels?
6. Name any two smaller rulers who acknowledged the suzerainty of Bahadur Shah Zafar.
7. Who was Tantia Tope?

8. Who was Ahmadullah Shah? What was his prophesy?
9. Who was Bakht Khan?
10. When did the British recapture Delhi?
11. Why were the powers of the East India Company transferred to the British Crown?

Short Questions:

1. Under what pretext did the Company take over Awadh?
2. How did the Company plan to bring an end to the Mughal dynasty?
3. Why were the Indian sepoys in the employ of the Company discontented? Give sufficient reasons.
4. What reforms did the British introduce in the Indian society? How did the people of India respond to them?
5. Why did the chiefs and rulers support the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar in the revolt?
6. How did the British try to win back the loyalty of the people after they recaptured Delhi?
7. What was the condition after recapturing of Delhi by the British?

Long Questions:

1. How did other Indian soldiers in Meerut participate in the Revolt of 1857? How did the regiments stationed in Delhi respond when they came to know about the arrival of the Meerut sepoys in the city?
2. How did the rebellion spread to other regions of the country?
3. How did the Company suppress the revolt?
4. How did the Company plan to end the Mughal Dynasty?
5. What was the reason behind the discontent of Indian sepoys of the Company?

Answer Key:

MCQ:

1. (a) Tantia Tope
2. (a) Birjis Qadr
3. (d) Rangoon
4. (d) Rani Lakshmbai

5. (c) Bahadur Shah Zafar
6. (a) Son of Peshwa Baji Rao II
7. (c) Soldier
8. (a) Kanpur
9. (d) Fat of cow and pig
- 10.(c) They are not allowed to adopt an heir to the throne.
- 11.(d) 1853
- 12.(d) 1857
- 13.(c) Hazrat Mahal
- 14.(d) 1858
- 15.(b) King of Jhansi

Very Short Answer:

1. Nana Saheb pleaded that he be given his father's pension when the latter died.
2. The name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins minted by the Company.
3. The Indian sepoys were underpaid.
4. The rumour spread that the new cartridges were coated with the fat of cows and pigs.
5. He wrote letters to all the chiefs and rulers of the country to come forward and organize a confederacy of Indian states to fight the British.
6. Nana Saheb and Bajiis Qadr.
7. He was the General of Nana Saheb.
8. Ahmadullah Shah was a Maulvi from Faizabad. His prophesy was that the rule of the British would soon come to an end.
9. Bakht Khan was a soldier from Bareilly. He took charge of a large force of fighters who came to Delhi.
10. The British recaptured Delhi in September 1857.
11. The powers of the East India Company were transferred to the British Crown in order to ensure a more responsible management of Indian affairs.

Short Answer:

Ans: 1. In 1801, a subsidiary alliance was imposed on Awadh, and in 1856, it was taken over. Governor-General Dalhousie declared that the territory was being misgoverned and British rule was needed to ensure proper administration.

Ans: 2. (a) First of all the name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins minted by the Company.

(b) In 1849, Governor-General Dalhousie announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the family of the king would be shifted out of the Red Fort and given another place in Delhi to live in.

(c) In 1856, Governor-General "Canning decided that Bahadur Shah Zafar would be the last Mughal king and after his death his descendants would be known as princes.

Ans: 3. Reasons for their discontentment:

(a) The Indian sepoys were given poor salaries and allowances.

(b) The conditions of service also made them unhappy.

(c) Some of the new rules even violated their religious sentiments and beliefs.

(d) Those were the days when many people in the country believed that if they crossed the sea they would lose their religion and caste. So when in 1824 the sepoys were told to go to Burma by the sea route to fight for the Company, they refused to follow this order. As a result, they were given severe punishment. What is more, in 1856, the Company passed a new law which stated that every new person who took up employment in the Company's army had to agree to serve overseas if required.

Ans: 4. The British introduced several reforms:

(a) They passed laws to stop the practice of sati and to encourage the remarriage of widows.

(b) They promoted English language education.

(c) In 1850, the Company passed a new law that made the conversion to Christianity easier.

Many Indians began to feel that the British were destroying their religion, their social customs and their traditional way of life. But at the same time there were other Indians who readily accepted the reforms introduced by the British. In fact, they wanted to change existing social practices.

Ans: 5. The Mughal dynasty had ruled over a large part of the country. Most smaller rulers and chieftains controlled different territories on behalf of the Mughal ruler. Threatened by the expansion of British rule, many of them felt that if the Mughal emperor could rule again, they too would be able to rule their own territories once more, under the Mughal authority.

Ans: 6. (a) The British announced rewards for loyal landholders by allowing them to continue to enjoy traditional rights over their lands.

(b) Those who had rebelled were told that if they submitted to the British and if they had

not killed any white people, they would remain safe and their rights and claims to land would not be denied.

Ans: 7. The recapturing of Delhi did not mean that the rebellion died down, people still continued with the resistance and battle with the British. The British had to fight for two years in this manner to suppress the massive forces of popular rebellion.

Long Answer:

Ans: 1. The other Indian soldiers in Meerut participated in the uprising wholeheartedly. On 10 May 1857 they marched to the jail in Meerut and released the sepoys who were sentenced to ten years' jail for disobeying their officers. They attacked and killed British officers. They captured guns and ammunition and set fire to the buildings and properties of the British and declared war on the firangis. The soldiers were determined to bring an end to the British rule in the country.

The sepoys of Meerut rushed to Delhi in the early hours on 11 May. As news of their arrival spread, the regiments stationed in Delhi also rose up in rebellion.

Again, British officers were killed, arms and ammunition were seized, buildings were set on fire. Triumphant soldiers gathered around the walls of the Red Fort where the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar lived, demanding to meet him. The emperor was not willing to challenge the mighty British power, but the soldiers persisted. They forced their way into the palace and proclaimed Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leaders. The emperor finally accepted this demand. After getting the leader, the soldiers began to plan for further action.

Ans: 2. The position of the British became very weak in Delhi, and they were almost defeated by the rebel force. Therefore, there was no uprising for almost a week. Afterwards a spurt of mutinies began in several parts of India. Regiment after regiment mutinied and took to join other troops at nodal points like Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow. After them, the people of the towns and villages also rose up in rebellion. They rallied around local leaders, zamindars and chiefs who were prepared to establish their authority and fight the British.

Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the late Peshwa Baji Rao who lived near Kanpur, gathered armed forces and expelled the British Garrison from the city. He proclaimed himself Peshwa. He declared that he was a Governor under emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. In Lucknow, Birjis Qadr, the son of the deposed Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, was proclaimed the new Nawab. He too acknowledged the suzerainty of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

In Jhansi, Rani Lakshmbai joined the rebel sepoys and fought the British along with Tantia Tope, the General of Nana Saheb.

A situation of widespread rebellion also developed in the region of Awadh. Many new

leaders also came up and joined the revolt. Ahmadullah Shah, a Maulvi from Faizabad, raised a large force of supporters. He came to Lucknow to fight the British.

In Delhi, a large number of religious warriors came together to wipe out the white people. Bakht Khan, a soldier from Bareilly, took charge of a large force of fighters who came to Delhi. In Bihar, an old zamindar, Kunwar Singh, joined the rebel sepoys and battled with the British for several months.

Ans: 3. The Company did not get nervous to see the strength of the rebel forces. Instead, it decided to suppress the revolt with all its might. It brought reinforcements from England, passed new laws so that the rebels could be convicted with ease, and then moved into the storm centres of the revolt. Delhi was recaptured from the rebel forces in September 1857. The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in court and sentenced to life imprisonment. He and his wife were sent to prison in Rangoon in October 1858.

The recapture of Delhi did not mean that the rebellion died down completely. People continued to resist and battle the British. So, the British had to fight for two years to suppress the massive forces of popular rebellion.

The British took Lucknow in 1858. Rani Lakshmi Bai was defeated and killed in June 1858. Tantia Tope, who fought a guerrilla war, was finally captured, tried and killed in April 1859.

Ans: 4. The Company began planning on how to end the Mughal dynasty in the following ways:

The name of the Mughal kings was removed from the coins minted by the Company.

In 1849, Governor-General Dalhousie announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah II, his family would be shifted out of Red Fort and given another place in Delhi to reside in.

In 1856, Governor-General Canning decided that Bahadur Shah Zafar would be the last Mughal king and after his death none of his descendants would be recognized as the king.

Ans: 5. The reason behind discontent of Indian sepoys were as follows:

The Indian sepoys in the employment of the Company were unhappy about the pay, allowances and conditions of their services.

New rules violated their religious sentiments and beliefs.

It was believed during that time that by crossing the sea one loses his religion and caste.

The sepoys were told to go to Burma in 1824 by the sea route to fight for the company and the sepoys refused to follow the order though they agreed to go through land route.

The refusal resulted in punishment.

The Company passed a law that stated that every new person who took up employment

in the Company army had to agree to serve overseas if required.

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