

Background:

- Enfield rifle + Bone dust in atta + General service enlistment Act → Soldier felt religion in grave danger + Administration did nothing to allay the fear + 19th Native Infantry at Behrampur had protested against use of Enfield rifle and mutiny in Feb, 1857 → Disbanded + 34th Native Infantry sepoy Mangal Pandey refused to use rifle and tried to kill officer → executed on 6th April + 24th April → 3rd Native Cavalry refused to accept greased cartridges + May 3rd → Awadh regiment refused to use rifle → 85 men sentenced to 10 years imprisonment → May 10th Soldiers release their imprisoned comrades and killed their officers → Start moving towards Delhi under Bakht Khan + Proclaim Bahadur Shah Zafar as Emperor Hindustan on 11th May, 1857 → From here revolt spread to other army centers in NWP and Awadh + Civilians joined rebellion + Started as Sepoy mutiny → later joined by ruler + zamindars + peasants + taluqdars + artisans + muslim clergy → Various strata suffered under British rule came together in 1857
- Violent uprising + British rule nearly collapsed until 1858 + Watershed moment

Causes of Revolt:

It started as sepoy mutiny but was gradually joined by various sections of society

Long term factors (Social + Political + Economic) + Immediate factors

- Social Factors:** (a) Racial discrimination very common + not allowed to mix with Europeans (b) Interference in socio religious affairs → laws passed in name of social reform abolition of Sati, Widow remarriage, Women Education but out of many acts Caste Disabilities Removal Act (Lex Loci Act, 1850) (c) Christian missionaries ridiculed Indian religion + (d) Government's decision to tax mosque and temple land -> these social laws considered by conservative Indians a British design to promote Christianity in India -> Conservative reaction in form of revolt
- Economic factors:** (a) Land revenue Settlement → alienated zamindar/ taluqdar but assumed they have popular base → but the rent was too high therefore no popular base + general discontent in major production classes in India (b) destruction of handicraft industries (c) Depeasantization + rural indebtedness (d) recurrent famine -> peasant and artisans were worst sufferer of british economic policies + Reaction against the money lenders also + Rampant Corruption (e) exploitation by money lenders (f) Economic Drain
- Political factors:** (a) Alienation of Aristocracy → In **Majha Pravaas** written by **Vishnubhatt Godse**, mentions his encounter with some soldiers who inform him about impending revolt as British introduced 84 new rules at a meeting with kings and princes at Calcutta; this had angered the kings and they refused to accept these (b) Muslims hurt at ill treatment of Mughal ruler → Lord Canning had informed Bahadur Shah will be last Mughal emperor of India and his descendant will have to evict Red fort (c) Absentee sovereigntyship (d) Overthrow of Pindaris, thugs and irregular soldiers (e) Exclusion of Indians in governance
- Military factors:** Earlier army had high caste character and their food, travel and caste rules were respected under Hastings → from 1820s reforms initiated to introduce more universalized military culture + campaigns in places where these could not be easily followed → Gradual weakening of loyalty in Army
 (a) Racial discrimination (b) angry at treatment of peasant as Sepoy was “peasant in uniform” (c) Discrimination in Pension, Position and Salary (d) General Service Enlistment Act, 1856 → no extra allowances for foreign posting + Hindu soldiers did not want to cross sea (e) Conditions of retreat of Afghan war → Ostracized by fellow sepoy and village (e) Annexation of Awadh, 1856 (f) Passing of Post Office Act, 1854 → Withdraw free postage

- Intensity of military factor was very high → The mutiny mainly affected Bengal army, Madras and Bombay remained quiet, whereas Punjabis and Gurkhas suppressed it
- Outside Events:** First Afghan war (1838-42), Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845-49), Crimean War (1854-56) → Exposed vulnerabilities of British
- Immediate Factors** → Introduction of Enfield rifle (cartridge of rifle was wrapped in fats Cows and pigs → Hurting Hindu and Muslim sentiment) + rumour of bone dust in atta → Feeling that religion is in grave danger

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Centre	Leader	Reason for Joining	British Officer
Delhi	General Bakht Khan (Originally from Delhi)	Commander of Rebel forces at Delhi	John Nicolson + Lt. Hudson
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan (80 years old)	Unsatisfied with amount of his pension	Brigadier General Jones Sir Colin Campbell
Jhansi	Rani Laxmi Bai	Doctrine of Lapse	Hugh Rose
Kanpur	Nana Saheb	Increased Pension + Denied Title of Peshwa	General Henry Havelock + Sir Colin Campbell + Colonel John Neill
Baraut	Shah Mal	oppressive British land revenue system + took over the bungalow of an English officer, turned it into a “hall of justice” + Supply base	N/A
Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal	Wanted to install her son Birjis Qadir as Nawab	Henry Havelock + James Outram + Sir Colin Campbell
Allahabad	Maulvi Liaquat Ali	Anti-British Sentiment	Colonel James George Smith Neill
Faizabad	Maulvi Ahmadullah Battle of Chinhat + Called Lighthouse of Revolt + Danka Shah – the maulvi with the drum (danka)	Religious Duty	Henry Lawrence (died in battle of Chinhat) + Jagannath Singh of Pawayan*
Bihar (Jagdishpur)	Kunwar Singh	British Control over his estate	Major Vincent Eyer
Sambalpur	Surendra Sai (adopted son of Maharaja Sai)	Opposed British annexation and loss of his rightful throne	Major Impey*
Punjab	Rai Ahmed Kharal	Fought against British oppression	Berkley
Mandla (MP)	Rani Avantibai Lodhi of Ramgarh	Led an army of 4,000 against British takeover of her state	General Hugh

Assam	Diwan Maniram Dutta	Employed as a clerk in the British administration + Maniram was the leader and directed the revolt from Calcutta and Piyali Barua executed all the plans as the Chief Lieutenant in Assam	
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Positive characteristics of the Revolt → Unprecedented Mass mobilization + Revival of local leadership who had been marginalized due to British policies such as Doctrine of Lapse + Communal Unity + National leader + Common Vision + Common Enemy + Exposed British Vulnerabilities while demonstrating their rule was not absolute and could be challenged

Reasons for failure:

- (a) No central leadership → Indian leaders no match to British opponents + Incompetency of Bahadur Shah (b) Lack of popular support → Not supported by modern educated, middle class, moneylenders, most native rulers, only 1/10th of population supported (c) Limited territorial base → Eastern, Western and Southern parts remained untouched (d) Lack of modern weapons → at times fighting with swords and spike, British soldiers supplied with Enfield rifles and artillery (e) Lack of coordination → British had electric telegraph which was unavailable to the Indians (f) No single objective/ common plan of action → everyone was fighting for their own interest (g) Lacked a vision of future society and economy + No common unifying ideology → C.A Bayly → “Indian Rebellion of 1857 was not one movement....it was many”

Azamgarh Proclamation:

- The Azamgarh Proclamation (Azamgarh Ishtehar), 25 August 1857 → contained five sections, one each for Zamindars, Merchants, Civil servants, Artisans, Pundits and Other learned persons + British hurt four things most dear to Hindus and Muslims → Religion, Honour, Life and Property
- Complete Hindu-Muslim unity → Bahadur Shah Proclaimed and recognized emperor of India by all + Cow slaughter banned

Different historians interpret in different way:

- **Indian view** → (a) Sir Syed Ahmed Khan → He was first to write about the revolt and blamed British for it and accepted general discontent among people (b) V.D. Savarkar → “First War of Indian Independence for Swadharma and Swaraj” (c) K.M.Panikar → “National Revolution” (d) Ashok Mehta → “War of Independence” (e) J.L Nehru → “much more than Sepoy mutiny + war of Independence” (f) R.C.Majumdar in his book “The Sepoy Mutiny and The Revolt of 1857” → “Neither first, nor national, nor war of Independence”+ S. N. Sen “1857” → Begun as a sepoy mutiny and took character of national revolt + **Revolutions are always work of minorities like in American and French Revolution**
- **British View** → Sir John Lawrence + Seelay → “Just a military revolt, absence of any nationalist feeling” + Rees “It was war of religious fanatics against Christianity” + Outram “Muslim Conspiracy” + T.R.Holmes “Clash between civilization and barbarians” + Benjamin Disraeli “It was nothing less than national revolt”

- **Modern Historians** → Different interests of different strata of society + Differentially of factors and commonality of interest i.e., directed against company and collaborators

Impact of the revolt:

- **GOI, 1858** → (a) EIC rule abolished from administrative responsibilities → British crown took direct responsibility (b) Board of control and Court of Directors abolished → Ministry created in England known as India House with Secretary of State (Lord Stanley) who was a cabinet minister → vested with responsibility of India → India council created to help secretary of state with 15 members (8 nominated by king + 7 elected from Court of Director + 9/15 members must have served 10 years in India + In 1907 first time Indians became part of this council: Sir Krishna Govinda Gupta and Nawab Syed Hussain Bilgrami)
- **Queen's proclamation of 1858** (Magna Carta for people of India) → (a) No territorial expansion of British rule in India → native princes were assured of territorial integrity (b) No Discrimination on basis of race, caste and religion “Intensity of colonialism varied with change in stages of colonialism but objective of colonialism remained the same + only structural changes not functional” (c) Equal and impartial protection of law was promised to all Indians (d) pardon to Indians part of Revolt of 1857 (e) Representative of crown was called Viceroy → Lord Canning first Viceroy of India
- **Changes in Military** → (a) Indian soldiers were drastically reduced from 238,000 in 1857 to 140,000 by 1863 + Number of European Soldiers was increased from 45,000 to 65,000 + fifty-fifty proportion in the Bengal army and one to two elsewhere (b) King's forces and the companies forces were amalgamated (c) New recruits were drawn largely from those martial races of the Punjab, Nepal and the North-western Frontier Province who proved their loyalty during the revolt (d) Every effort was made to isolate the army from the civilian population (d) Artillery to be only under British officers (e) Development of British communities to keep away from Indian soldiers + Increased racial segregation (f) Ashley Eden Commission (1879) (g) Nicholson Committee (1912) (h) Sandhurst Committee (1926) (e) Chatfield Committee (1939)
- **Social Impact** → Catalyst for Policy Changes + Decay of learning among Muslims + Hindu reforms cautiously continued + Policy of divide and rule + Cultural losses for Muslims
- **Governance** → Faith reposed in ‘natural leaders’ + Victorian liberalism replaced by conservative brand of liberalism + Process of Decentralization + Initiated association of Indians with legislation
- **Economic Impact** → Shift from direct plunder to disguised and complex means of exploitation.
- **Impact on Freedom Struggle** → Foundation of National Consciousness + Leadership Shift from traditional to educated middle class + Preference for orderly progress and constitutional methods + a critical step in India's long journey toward independence