



When People Rebel -1857 and After (Easy Notes for class 8th)

Description

Introduction:

After facing a series of oppressive measures and policies by the British East India Company, the people of India, especially those in the northern region, initiated a revolt against the Company's rule. In this chapter, we will explore the different reasons, major and minor, that contributed to the start of the Great War of Independence. Lastly, we will learn about the changes made by British after the 1857 revolt.

Gradual Causes of Revolt:

Political Cause: Nawabs lose their power

- Gradually, Nawabs and Rajas lost their power due to different policies imposed on them.
 - **For Example:** Under the Doctrine of lapse, *Rani Laxmi Bai* saw annexation of Jhansi. Likewise, the authorities did not recognize *Nana Sahib* as the rightful heir to his father's (Peshwa Baji Rao II) pension.
 - Moreover, Company imposed the Subsidiary Alliance on Awadh (Ruler was *Wajid Ali Shah*) and accused them of misgovernance, which ultimately led to the annexation of the region.
- These policies curtailed their freedom, disbanded their armed forces, and confiscated their revenue and territories.
- The Company also removed the king from the coin in order to end the rule.
- Governor General Canning declared *Bahadur Shah Zafar* as the last Mughal king.

Economic Cause: Resentment of Zamindars and Peasants

- High taxes forced peasants into debt and caused them to lose their lands over time.
- Moreover, The English Government's rigid revenue collection methods caused peasants' anger.

Military Cause: Discontentment of Sepoys

- The Indian sepoy received extremely low salaries and allowances.
- They were even unhappy about their conditions of service.
 - **For Example:** Compulsory rule of serving abroad through sea route and strict military discipline.

Social Cause: intrusion into religious affairs and traditional education system.

- The British brought changes to Indian social customs and education, which caused mixed feelings among Indians.
 - **For Example:** British passed laws such as Abolition of Sati System, Widow Remarriage Act 1856, English Education Act 1835.
- The officials actively promoted English language education.
- Furthermore, the Company allowed Christian missionaries to own land and property and operate freely.
- The Company made conversion easier by passing ['The Caste Disabilities Removal Act'](#)

Immediate Cause: A Mutiny Becomes a Popular Rebellion

- The introduction of the [Enfield rifle](#) became a significant factor leading to the Indian Rebellion of 1857.
- This rebellion is also known as the Sepoy Mutiny or the First War of Indian Independence.

Mangal Pandey's Martyrdom Sparks Revolution

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- **Mangal Pandey**, a young soldier in the **34th Bengal Native Infantry** regiment, refused to accept the use of the Enfield Rifle and began protesting against it.
- While protesting, he, along with some others, even attempted to shoot his officers.
- As a result, authorities hanged him **on March 29, 1857**, in **Barrackpore**.

However this was not the end of the protest but the beginning of a great revolt of 1857.

- Some **Meerut soldiers** refused new cartridges, fearing they contained animal fat.
- Consequently, the disobedience of Indian soldiers led officers to dismiss and imprison them on **May 9, 1857**.

From Meerut to Delhi:

- In response, the other soldiers marched to the jail in Meerut on **May 10, 1857**.
- They attacked and killed British officers and released the imprisoned sepoys.
- Along with, soldiers even captured guns and ammunition and set fire to the buildings and properties of the British.
- Thus, the revolt against **firangis** began.
- On 11th May, the soldiers reached Delhi to proclaim Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leader.

Note: The Revolt of 1857 began from **Meerat**.

- Bahardur Shah Zafar accepted the demand and wrote letters to all the chiefs and rulers of the country.
- In his letters, he urged Indian chiefs and rulers to unite against the British.

The Rebellion Spreads:

- Soon, the Rebellion spread across Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Gwalior, Mandla and Bihar.
 - **Nana Sahib** Aka Dhondu Pant, the son of the late Peshwa Baji Rao rebelled from **Kanpur** against British. **Tantia Tope** assisted him.
 - **Birjis Qadr**, the son of the deposed Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was proclaimed the new Nawab. His mother, **Hazart Mahal** took initiative against Britishers from **Lucknow**.
 - **Rani Laxmibai** too fought against the firangis from her Kingdom at **Jhansi**.
 - **Rani Avantibai Lodhi** raised her voice and led an army from **Ramgarh**.
 - **Ahmadullah Shah**, a maulvi (doctor of law) from **Faizabad**, predicted the collapse of British rule.
 - **Bakht Khan**, a soldier from the city of **Bareilly**, led a large group of fighters to **Delhi**.
 - **Kunwar Singh**, an aged zamindar, fought in **Bihar** alongside the rebel sepoys.

The Company Fights Back:

- The rebellion was strong, but some weaknesses held it back.
- **Reasons** for set back were :-
 - **Poor Organization:** The Revolt failed because it wasn't well-organized and was only happening in small areas.
 - **Not Enough Support:** Many people didn't join the Revolt, which made it hard for it to succeed.
 - **No Common Goals:** The soldiers involved didn't all want the same thing, so they couldn't

work together very well.

- **Finding a Good Leader Was Tough:** It was difficult to find someone good at leading both in battle and in politics.
- Thus, these weaknesses gave the Company the chance to crush the revolt once more.
- The Company passed new laws to punish the rebels with ease.
 - Bahadur Shah Zafar and his wife Zeenat Mahal got life imprisonment in Rangoon jail.
 - Rani Laxmibai and Avantibai Lodhi died fighting against Britishers.
 - Tantia Tope escaped and led guerrilla war but soon tried and killed in April 1859.
 - Nana Sahib fled to Nepal and disappeared.
- Moreover, the **British attempted** to regain the loyalty of the people through **various means and strategies**.
 - They offered traditional rights as rewards to loyal landholders in an attempt to regain their support.
 - Furthermore, they urged the rebels to surrender to the British authorities.
 - They assured safety and rights to those who refrained from harming any Europeans.

Aftermath:

After regaining the control, the British made several changes in Laws.

- **The Act of 1858:** The British Parliament decided to transfer power from the East India Company to British Crown. In Addition, the post got changed from Governor-General to Viceroy.
- **Abolition of Doctrine of Lapse:** They permitted adopted sons to ascend to the throne.
- **Reduction in the quantity of Indians in Army:** The British authorities decided to elevate the number of European soldiers in the army in comparison to Indian soldiers
- **Partial Recruitment from specific regions:** They actively recruited more soldiers from the Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Pathans.
- **Respect for Customary religious and social practices:** The crown assured non-interference with the people's religious beliefs.
- **Security of Land Rights:** They enacted policies to safeguard landlords and zamindars, ensuring secure land rights.

Category

1. Class 8th

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