

# THE ORIGIN AND COURSE OF THE INDIAN REVOLT OF 1857

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## Abstract:

*This paper aim is to study the origin and course of the Indian revolt of 1857. The revolt of 1857 was the conscious beginning of the Independence struggle against the colonial tyranny of the British. There are various names for the revolt of 1857 – India’s First War of Independence, Sepoy Mutiny, etc. The revolt began on May 10, 1857, at Meerut as a sepoy mutiny. It was initiated by sepoys in the Bengal Presidency against the British officers. This war of Independence marked the end of rule by the British East India company. Post this, India was directly ruled by the British government through representatives known as Governor-General. The course of revolt of 1857 occurred due to the suffering that Indians went through under British rule. Besides poor socio-economic conditions, biased judiciary economic destruction has further intensified the occurrence of the revolt. The predominant fight for the Independence of India was not an easy task to execute. However, the long fight against the British government and snatching Indian independence was not conducted in a few days. It has taken almost the 18th and half of the 19th century to gain independence from British rule. In order to gain Independence from the English constituent, the common people and patriotic sepoys fought by keeping their life at stake. Different types of revolts were conducted by the Indian sepoys, some of the revolts were successful and most of them were not. During the time of the revolt, uncountable patriotic sepoys sacrificed the lives of their own will. In the 18th century, the common Indian people and sepoys were primarily conducting different types of revolt. One of the most significant revolts was conducted in the year 1857, which was called the “Sepoy mutiny revolt”. The specifically mentioned mutiny failed and thus it encouraged the other brave movement, which was conducted in the late 18th century or early 19th century. The “Sepoy mutiny revolt” worked as a harbinger and primarily encouraged the “Indian national movements”. The immediate factor was the introduction of the ‘Enfield’ rifle. The cartridge had to be bitten off before loading it into the gun. Indian sepoys believed that the cartridge was greased with either pig fat or made from cow fat. This was against the Hindu and Muslim sentiments. Thus they were reluctant to use the ‘Enfield’ rifle. This was a flashpoint to enrage the soldiers against the British. This was believed to be the immediate factor for the revolt of 1857.*

**Keywords:** Origin, India, Revolt of 1857 Etc.

## INTRODUCTION:

The course of revolt of 1857 occurred due to the suffering that Indians went through under British rule. Besides poor socio-economic conditions, biased judiciary economic destruction has further intensified the occurrence of the revolt. The predominant fight for the Independence of India was not an easy task to execute.

However, the long fight against the British government and snatching Indian independence was not conducted in a few days. It has taken almost the 18th and half of the 19th century to gain independence from British rule. In order to gain Independence from the English constituent, the common people and patriotic sepoys fought by keeping their life at stake. Different types of revolts were conducted by the Indian sepoys, some of the revolts were successful and most of them were not. During the time of the revolt, uncountable patriotic sepoys sacrificed the lives of their own will. In the 18th century, the common Indian people and sepoys were primarily conducting different types of revolt. One of the most significant revolts was conducted in the year 1857, which was called the “Sepoy mutiny revolt”. The specifically mentioned mutiny failed and thus it encouraged the other brave movement, which was conducted in the late 18th century or early 19th century. The “Sepoy mutiny revolt” worked as a harbinger and primarily encouraged the “Indian national movements”. The revolt of 1857 was first conducted on 10th May 1857, in Meerut. The significant revolt lasted for one long year. During this time, the British rulers killed countless patriotic sepoys. However still this revolt continued for a long period of time, thus the revolt was predominated by the British ruler and was unsuccessful. India primarily needed a certain level of peaceful changes, which the revolt of 1857 could initially bring. Apart from this, the major highlight of the 1857’s revolt was abolishing the British “East India company’s rule in India. After the predominant “East India Company” came to India for business, in that time the British domination started towards the Indian citizens. In the “Revolt of 1857,” the total northern and central part of India participated in this first-ever important revolt.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

This paper aim is to study the origin and course of the Indian revolt of 1857.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

This paper is purely based on secondary sources of data such as websites, journals, articles, books and other sources.

### **INDIAN REVOLT OF 1857:**

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## CAUSES OF REVOLT OF 1857

The revolt of 1857 was initiated due to various factors which are stated below:

### 1. Revolt of 1857 Political Causes

The British policy of immediate annexation and expansion under the Doctrine of Lapse, promoted by Lord Dalhousie, was the primary Political Cause of the Revolt of 1857. Between 1848 to 1856 Lord Dalhousie served as the Governor-General of India, and it was under his direction that the British added a number of new territories to the Indian subcontinent. The Doctrine of Lapse greatly incensed the rulers of India against the British authority. Some of the Indian princes' titles and pensions were also seized. Following the passing of Baji Rao II, Nana Sahib's pension was halted, and the Rani of Jhansi lost her right to reign. She was stripped as a result of the British government's breach of Hindu law. The Governor-General annexed Satara (1848), Sambalpur (1850), Jhansi (1853), Nagpur (1853), Jaipur (1849) and Bhagalpur in the course of eight years (1850). The Religious Disabilities Act of 1850 made it possible for a Hindu who converted to another religion to inherit his ancestors' wealth. The Hindus saw this as a reason to renounce one's religious beliefs. On the grounds of poor administration, Lord Dalhousie conquered Awadh, which resulted in the unemployment of thousands of officials, retainers, lords, and soldiers. Due to Lord Dalhousie's action, Awadh became a raging hotbed of anti-British sentiment. Bahadur Shah II's death prompted Dalhousie to propose the abolition of the Mughal Emperor title.

### 2. Revolt of 1857 Economic Causes

Public animosity stemmed from the British tactic of economically exploiting India. The general public suffered as a result of high tax expectations and a strict program for collecting revenue. India's economic potential was exploited by the British, who used it to create a colonial economy that benefited their capitalist interests. India endured destitution after the Industrial Revolution in England because the arrival of British manufactured goods undermined local handicrafts and enterprises. In India, British colonists controlled all plantation industries, including those for indigo, jute, tea, and coffee. Peasants and the British government started interacting as a result of the new British revenue system. Talukdars and zamindars, which used to collect land tax, lost both their revenue and their position as a result of the system eliminating the middlemen from the equation. In 1852, Lord Dalhousie gave the Inam Commission the task of looking into the landlords' title documents. Those who failed to provide documentation proving their ownership rights had those rights revoked.

### 3. Revolt of 1857 Socio-Economic Causes

The British treated Indians unfairly on account of their race and treated them with contempt. Many locations, including parks, hotels, and first-class rail cars, were off-limits to them because they were specifically designated for Englishmen. The racial smugness the Britishers displayed injured the Indians, and as a result, the Indians came to view the English as their deadliest foes. The legalisation of widow remarriage and the outlawing of customs like Sati and female infanticide were seen as threats to society. This was viewed as a blow

to the established Indian social order. The change in the Hindu law of property, the spread of Christian missionaries, and the introduction of English education disturbed the orthodox Indians.

#### 4. Revolt of 1857 Military Causes

The British and Indian troops were treated very differently in terms of pay and other amenities. High officers mistreated the Indian soldiers because they were seen as inferior. Englishmen were the only people allowed to hold the highest positions in the military. Caste and religious symbols were not permitted on Indian soldiers while they were in the military. It amounted to the British interfering in the Indian troops' private and religious matters. The General Services Enlistment Act mandated that sepoy serve overseas, including on British soil. The majority of Indian soldiers served in conflicts for the English in Iran, China, and Crimea. Indian culture at the time regarded crossing the Sea as a loss of religion. This increased resentment toward the British.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

1. The "Revolt of 1857" was the initial step in the independence struggle. The revolt was primarily known by various different names worldwide, which initially includes, "Sepoy rebellion, Sepoy Mutiny, sepoy revolt, Indian mutiny and also the first war of Indian Independence".
2. The particular incident was known as the sepoy mutiny because the heart of Indian patriotic sepoys primarily conducted it.
3. Apart from this, the rebellion of the sepoy mutiny was primarily proved as an important watershed in British emperor and Indian governmental history.
4. It initially led the predominant East India Company to dissolution and also primarily forced the British ruler to recognize their army, administration department and financial system of India.

#### THE COURSE OF THE REVOLT OF 1857: REVOLUTION

1. This rule was derivatively conducted through the passage of the Indian governmental act, which was conducted in the year 1858. Some of the 18th century patriotic heroes stated that the characteristics of revolt initially led to the actual grievances against unpatriotic sepoys' annexation and also primarily joined the predominant fact of rebellion.
2. Powerful British governments were initially derived from the civilian matter of administration of the European region, thus the British government initially refused this significant historical matter.
3. The sepoy mutiny of 1857 was caused by four different types of revolution, that can include the political, economical, social and military causes"
4. Restricting the interconnected relationship between the common public of the nation to prevent further revolt, was considered as the post segmented effects of sepoys' mutiny.

## IMMEDIATE IMPACT

1. Government of India Act, 1858: Under this Act, the rule of the East India Company was abolished and the British Parliament had taken direct responsibility towards ruling India. The EIC returned to being just a trading organization.
2. The role of the Governor-General became more pronounced and his profile was now counted as the Viceroy as well.
3. The difference between Governor-General and Viceroy was that the Viceroy would act as the representative of the Queen and the Governor-General was the representative of the British Parliament whose authority was restricted to that of British India itself and not on the Princely States.
4. The Board of Control (established under the 1784 Pitt's India Act) was abolished. A new ministry was created known as 'India House', headed by the Secretary of State for India who was a minister of cabinet rank.
5. There were 15 advisors to the 'India House', who had wide experience of working in India. Thus the British Parliament was trying to create a mechanism to avoid any further chances of revolt. The India House was the apex body to govern India and was a connecting link between the British Parliament and the Indian governing system.

## Leaders of the Revolt and Storm Centres:

- The uprising expanded over the whole region, from Patna's outskirts to Rajasthan's borders.
- Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Jhansi, Gwalior, and Arrah in Bihar are the primary centers of insurrection in these areas.
- Lucknow was the capital of the Awadh state. Begum Hazrat Mahal, one of the ex-king of Awadh's Begum, assumed command of the insurrection.
- Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, led the mutiny at Kanpur.
- He joined the insurrection largely because the British had taken away his pension.
- The victory was fleeting. After further forces came, the British were able to regain Kanpur. The uprising was put down with fury.
- Nana Saheb managed to flee, but his superb leader Tantia Tope fought on. Tantia Tope was defeated, jailed, and hung in the end.
- When the British refused to acknowledge her adopted son's claim to the kingdom of Jhansi, the twenty-two-year-old Rani Lakshmi Bai commanded the rebels. She battled valiantly against the British army, but the English eventually overpowered her.
- After Rani Lakshmi Bai fled, she was joined by Tantia Tope, and the two marched to Gwalior, where they were arrested.
- There was a fierce battle, and the Rani of Jhansi fought like a tigress till she perished, battling until the last.
- The British were able to retake Gwalior.

- Kunwar Singh, a member of a royal family from Jagdispur, Bihar, spearheaded the insurrection.

## Revolt of 1857 Reasons for Failure

Old and frail, Bahadur Shah was unable to lead the uprising. The uprising lacked central leadership and coordination, and it was poorly organised. The insurrection only briefly extended across a large area. The majority of India was largely unaffected. The larger princely states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Kashmir, Travancore, and Rajputana, as well as the minor ones, resisted the uprising. The wealthy merchants and businessmen, as well as many zamindars, backed the British. Indians with modern education perceived the uprising as being retrograde. The Indian forces lacked enough equipment. The insurrection was ill-prepared and lacked a firm understanding of British control. All-India participation was absent - One cause was the revolt's limited geographical extension. It lacked an all-India veneer; India's eastern, southern, and western regions were mostly unharmed. This was most likely due to the Company's harsh suppression of previous uprisings in those areas. All classes did not join - Even Awadh taluqdars backed off after pledges of land restoration were spelled out, and big zamindars served as storm breakers.' Moneylenders and merchants were particularly vulnerable to the mutineers' rage, and their interests were better safeguarded under British patronage. Educated Indians saw the insurrection as backward-looking, pro-feudal, and a backlash to modernity by old conservative forces; these individuals had great hopes that the British would usher in a period of modernization. The majority of Indian kings declined to join and frequently aided the British. Poor Arms and Equipment - The Indian forces were inadequately armed, fighting mostly with swords and spears, with few cannons and muskets. European soldiers, on the other hand, were armed with cutting-edge weaponry such as the Enfield rifle. The electric telegraph kept the commander-in-chief up to date on the rebels' movements and plans. Uncoordinated and Poorly Organised - The uprising was poorly organized, with no central leadership or coordination. In terms of generalship, the main rebel commanders - Nana Saheb, Tantia Tope, Kunwar Singh, and Laxmibai - were no match for their British opponents. The East India Company, on the other hand, was lucky to have persons of remarkable ability such as the Lawrence brothers, John Nicholson, James Outram, Henry Havelock, and others. No Unified Ideology - The mutineers lacked a thorough knowledge of colonial control, as well as a future-oriented agenda, a cohesive philosophy, a political vision, and a sociological alternative. The insurgents represented a variety of forces with varying grievances and political ideologies. At this point in Indian history, a lack of unity among Indians was probably inescapable. In India, modern nationalism was unheard of. In reality, the insurrection of 1857 was essential in drawing the Indian people together and instilling in them a sense of belonging to a single country.

## CONCLUSION:

In the year 1857, during the time of revolt protest, millions of common Indian people participated and joined the active rebellion. Hence it is primarily concluded that the mainstream cause of the 1857's revolt was to initially finish up the "East India Company's rule and establish the direct rule of the Indian government, without the British predominance or interference. In the year 1857, during the ruling period of the British



government, the governor of the British parliament primarily succeeded in surprising the revolt remuneration. The sepoys primarily joined the rebellion with the sole intention of liberating the Indian region from British rule. The Revolt of 1857 is significant in the history of Indian freedom because it united people from many societal groups to fight for a common goal. The adoption of the Government of India Act, which ended the rule of the British East India Company in India and signalled the start of the British government's direct rule over India, was the main result of the Revolt of 1857.

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