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The Revolt of 1857

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ An overview of the Revolt of 1857 – also called the Sepoy Mutiny by the British and the First War of Independence by Indian historians
- ▶ Understanding the reasons for it and the outcome

Objectives

- ▶ To understand the causes leading to the revolt
- ▶ To learn how various segments of society were unhappy with British rule
- ▶ To know about the events and progress of the revolt and the suppression by the British
- ▶ To appreciate the changes that came as a result of the revolt

Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, charts, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain the background to the Revolt of 1857 – the political, economic, social and religious causes – that led to the revolt.
- ▶ Explain why it is called the Revolt or the Sepoy Mutiny by British historians and the First War of Independence by Indian historians.
- ▶ Explain the events of the revolt, the manner in which the British responded.
- ▶ Explain the fallout of the revolt – its failure, the change in control and government.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to know places, locations and their placement on the maps.

Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the boxes.

- ▶ Particularly focus on the various aspects of the revolt—causes, events and outcome.

Nature of the Revolt of 1857

- ▶ First War of Independence—because various segments of Indian society stood up against the British—the result and culmination of popular discontent and resistance against the exploitation and oppression of British policies.
- ▶ British ruled for about 100 years (1757-1857)—dissatisfaction and distrust among masses—several uprisings across the country—1857 revolt saw participation of peasants, craftsmen, soldiers, artisans, nobles, rulers.
- ▶ British historians like James Outram and PE Roberts—caused by mutiny of soldiers—against introduction of greased cartridges—called it fight between civilised and uncivilised people.
- ▶ Disraeli called it a National Revolt—people united by their hatred of the British.

Causes of the Revolt

- ▶ Many causes for the uprising. Let's go through them briefly.

Political Causes

- ▶ Expansion policy of British—Subsidiary Alliances and Doctrine of Lapse—created distrust among rulers—kings and princes became subordinates—Jhansi, Satara, Sambhalpur, Nagpur, Awadh, etc., affected.
- ▶ Indians excluded from all high civil and military positions—in the army only post of subedar with low wages given to Indians.
- ▶ Educated Indians dissatisfied at not getting permanent jobs.
- ▶ Granting pensions and titles to Indian rulers also caused discontent among the rulers—Nana Sahib, adopted son of Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao II, denied pension.

Economic Causes

- ▶ High rates of land revenue collected by British—peasants miserable—exploited by the British and by moneylenders—lost their lands and became jobless.
- ▶ British used all Indian resources for their own benefit—created scarcity of raw material.
- ▶ Indian goods subjected to heavy duty.
- ▶ Craftsmen and artisans affected by cheap machine-made goods.
- ▶ Patronage of kings and rulers lost—peasants and artisans all at mercy of British.

Social and Religious Causes

- ▶ Conversion by Christian missionaries—frightened people.
- ▶ Lands owned by temples taxed—people dependent on land hurt by British action.
- ▶ Hindus insecure by reforms—widow remarriage, abolition of sati, women's education—hostile to British.

- ▶ Prisons–people of all castes put into same cell–blow to religious sentiment.
- ▶ Racial discrimination against Indians–denied high-ranking jobs, entry into hotels, public places, etc.–caused resentment.

Military Causes

- ▶ Indians either sepoys or restricted to post of subedar–never higher.
- ▶ Indians considered inferior–paid less than British officials.
- ▶ General Service Enactment Act 1856–soldiers forced to serve overseas–Hindus objected to travel overseas.
- ▶ Overseas allowance or bhatta given to soldiers, discontinued when they returned to country.

Immediate Cause

- ▶ Enfield rifle introduced in 1856–cartridges smeared with grease and covered with caps that had to be removed before use–sepoys believed the grease was made of cow fat or pig fat–hurt religious sentiments of Hindus and Muslims.
- ▶ 9 March 1857–85 soldiers at Meerut protested against use of the cartridges–sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment–sepoys set fire to British houses–killed British men, women and children–some proceeded to Delhi.
- ▶ 29 March 1857- Mangal Pandey revolted–called other sepoys at Barrackpore–he was hanged on 8 April 1857.

Events and Places of the Revolt

- ▶ Apart from sepoys revolting events in several places. Some of these have been briefly described below.

Jhansi

- ▶ Rani Lakshmi Bai revolted–Doctrine of Lapse–her adopted son was not considered her heir–joined hands with Taty Tope and they captured Gwalior–courage appreciated by enemy–but they killed her in battle in 1858.

Kanpur

- ▶ Nana Saheb led troop at Kanpur–called himself the Peshwa–supported by Taty Tope and Azimullah–when British captured Kanpur he fled to Nepal.
- ▶ Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur led revolt in Central India and Uttar Pradesh–supported sepoys at Lucknow and Kanpur–but died in 1858.

Delhi

- ▶ Bahadur Shah Zafar, Mughal Emperor–made leader of sepoy revolt from Meerut–contingent under Sir John Lawrence attacked Delhi–Bahadur Shah captured and deported to Rangoon–sons shot dead–ended Mughal empire.

Awadh

- ▶ Begum Hazrat Mahal made minor son the Nawab—helped by sepoys, peasants and talukdars—British army instead of fighting, took refuge in a building near Gomti river—sepoys set fire to it—many killed, including Henry Lawrence—sepoys controlled the building for 8 months—Colin Campbell captured Awadh, helped by Gorkhas—rebels looted treasury, burnt military barracks—Lord Canning, then Governor General mobilised his forces and took help from commanders—revolt suppressed brutally—people killed ruthlessly.

Causes for the Failure of the Revolt

- ▶ Confined to certain areas only—did not spread across India.
- ▶ Indian leaders not organised and trained—lacked unity and foresight.
- ▶ No proper plan of action—revolt began earlier than planned.
- ▶ Used outdated weapons—many Indian rulers like the Nizams, the Holkars, the Scindhias, the Rajputs were loyal to the British.
- ▶ Educated Indians remained loyal to the British for selfish reasons.

Effects of the Revolt

1. East India Company's rule ended in India—Queen Victoria took over administration in 1858.
 2. Secretary of State appointed—replaced Board of Control.
 3. Governor General was made Viceroy—subordinate to Secretary of State.
 4. Army reorganised.
 5. Queen Victoria's Proclamation passed in 1858.
 6. According to Proclamation—Indian princes assured—no further annexation by British.
 7. Queen promised—no interference in social and religious practices.
 8. General pardon to all rebels, including those who killed British personnel.
 9. Revolt brought people closer—aroused patriotic feelings among Indians.
- ▶ The Revolt a memorable turning point in the history of India—left a mark, though not successful—paved the way for nationalism.

Assessment Corner

Oral Assignment

- A. Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers. Let them write down the correct answers if they like in their books.

Written Assignment

- B–E. The teacher has two options—(i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers to the students and they can ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

Think Tank

- F. **HOTS questions:** Discuss the questions in the class and let the students write the answers to F and G as homework. Teacher should assess individual work.