

3. The Great Revolt of 1857

Exercise

1 A. Question

Choose the correct answer:

The Great Revolt of 1857 took place during the period of Lord

A. Bentinck

B. Canning

C. Dalhousie

Answer

Lord Canning was the Governor-General appointed by the British. Canning became general in 1856 and after the famous revolt of 1857, till 1862 he was on the post.

1 B. Question

Choose the correct answer:

The sepoy mutiny first broke out in

A. Barrackpore

B. Delhi

C. Kanpur

Answer

Barrackpore. It later spread to Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, and Lucknow.

1 C. Question

Choose the correct answer:

..... was the first soldier who refused to use the greased cartridge.

A. Mangal Panday

B. Nana Sahib

C. Bahadur Shah

Answer

Mangal Pandey. He was a sepoy (sipahi) in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) regiment of the British East India Company.

1 D. Question

Choose the correct answer:

The main political cause for the great Revolt of 1857 was

- A. Heavy Taxes
- B. Dual government
- C. Doctrine Lapse.

Answer

Doctrine of Lapse. The policies of Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine of Lapse angered the ruling sections of the society.

2. Question

Fill in the blanks:

1. was a culmination of the accumulated grievances of the Indian people against the British rule.
2. The Great Revolt of 1857 is known as
3. The immediate cause of the revolt of 1857 was the introduction of
4. The English Troops Under Sir John Nicholson captured

Answer

1. The revolt of 1857
2. Sepoy Mutiny or First war of Indian Independence
3. Greased Cartridges to the Sepoys
4. Delhi

3. Question

Match the following:

1. Mangal Panday	Central India
2. Tantia Tope	Barrackpore
3. Lord Canning	Commander of Nana Saheb's forces
4. Rani Lakshmi Bai	The first viceroy of India.

Answer

Mangal Panday → Barrackpore

Tantia Tope → Commander of Nana Saheb's forces

Lord Canning → The first viceroy of India

Rani Lakshmi Bai → Central india

4. Question

Answer in one word:

1. Who started the revolt of 1857?

2. Which state was annexed on the pretext of misgovernment?

3. Who joined with Rani Lakshmi Bai during the revolt of 1857?

4. Who undertook the administration of British India after the Great Revolt of 1857?

Answer

1. Mangal Pandey

2. The State of Oudh

3. Tantia Tope

4. Queen Victoria

5 A. Question

Give short answer:

Why was Mangal Pandey hanged by the British?

Answer

- Mangal Pandey, was a devoted Hindu Brahmin, and rejected the use of fat in the cartridges and decided to take violent action against the British.
- He was a sepoy under the British army.
- At the Barrackpore near Kolkata, on the afternoon of 29 March 1857, Pandey attacked and injured his British officers.
- His actions against the British created a series of revolts all over India, resulted in India's First War of Independence.
- Mangal Pandey was hanged to death on April 8, 1857.

5 B. Question

Give short answer:

Write a short note on the nature of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Answer

- The revolt was unorganized, unplanned and immediate
- There were multiple causes for the revolt.
- The results of the revolt lead to the spread of patriotism
- The revolt manifested the restraints of the Indians under the british rule.

5 C. Question

Give short answer:

Write a short note on Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi.

Answer

Rani Lakshmi bhai was one of the foremost figures of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and became a symbol of resistance to the British. She was the queen of the princely state of Jhansi in North India (present U.P). She set up huge cannon to be used on the walls of the fort and gathered forces that enabled the victory over the invaders of the revolt of 1857. She joined additional rebel forces, including Tantia Tope. They engaged the town of Kalpi and prepared to defend it. On 22 May 1857 British forces attacked Kalpi; the forces were instructed by the Rani herself and were again conquered.

6 A. Question

Answer in detail:

Analyze the various causes for the Great Revolt of 1857.

Answer

The revolt of 1857 marked a very important place in the struggle for Indian independence. It was after that event, the common people of India entered into the phase of serious attempts to fling away britishers. There are different levels when causes of the great revolt of 1857 is analysed. They are:

- a) Economic causes
- b) Social causes
- c) Religious causes
- d) Political causes
- e) Military causes
- f) Immediate cause

a) Economic Causes:

- 1) The Britishers were economically exploiting India.
- 2) This created intolerance in all sections of society.
- 3) The high tax/ revenue system put the burden of debt on farmers.
- 4) The other working sections suffered from dishonest import and export.
- 5) Indian goods were purchased for cheap rates from the manufacturers and sold for huge amounts in world market.
- 6) The system of administration was so corrupt. And it created discontent among the people.

b) Social Causes:

- 1) The social reforms introduced by British included:
 - the abolition of 'sati',
 - legalization of widow remarriage and
 - extension of western education
- 2) This generated problems among people especially to women as these social reforms were looked upon as examples of interference in the social customs of the country.
- 3) The social reforms initiated by the British were looked upon with suspicion by the conventional sections of the Indian society.

The social discrimination faced by the Indians due to the British attitude of racial superiority also led to much resentment. Educated Indians were denied promotions and appointments to high office. This turned them against the British.

c) Religious Causes:

- a) The religious sentiments of the people were also insulted by the Britishers.
- b) There was a fear among the people that the British government was determined to destroy their religion
- c) They also believed that the British and convert Indians to Christianity.
- d) The policy of taxing lands belonging to temples and mosques also increased the fear of people.
- e) The increasing actions of the Christian missionaries and the actual conversions made by them were taken as an evidence of this fear.
- f) The belief that their religion was under threat, united all sections of society against a common enemy.

d) Political Causes:

- a) The territorial annexations led to the dislocation of a large number of rulers and chiefs.
- b) the British policies of Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine of Lapse were very dangerous.
- c) Rani Lakshmi Bai and Nana Sahib and led to the revolt against British in their respective territories.
- d) In 1856, his kingdom was annexed by Dalhousie, Governor General of the East India Company on the grounds of internal misrule.
- e) Awadh was the exact location for the beginning of the first great revolt of Indian Independence.
- f) The annexation of Awadh, on grounds of misgovernment, was greatly disliked.
- g) The annexation was widely seen as a rude act by the British.
- h) It deeply damaged the sentiments of the Company's sepoys because most of them came from Awadh.
- i) the people of Awadh were continuously oppressed.
- j) Peasants had to pay even higher revenue and additional taxes were made compulsory.
- k) The British provided no substitute source of employment to the people who lost their jobs due to the suspension of the Nawab's administration.

e) Military Causes:

- a) The Indian sepoy were looked upon as substandard beings and treated with disrespect by their British officers.
- b) They were paid much less than the British soldiers.
- c) All avenues of the promotion were closed to them
- d) All the higher army posts were reserved for the British and Indians were denied any promotions.
- e) There were other specific and more immediate causes for the displeasure among the sepoy.
- f) The annexation of Awadh irritated their strong feelings against foreign rule.
- g) They were also influenced by the general fear that their religion was in danger.
- h) The sepoy were restricted from wearing caste and sectarian marks hurt their sentiments deeply.
- i) The Act of 1816 required the new recruits to travel overseas.
- j) The Hindu sepoy defended this because, as according to the popular Hindu belief, travel across the sea led to a loss of caste.
- k) Another cause of sepoy displeasure was the withdrawal of the Foreign Service allowance ('batta'), which the sepoy were getting for fighting outside the country.

f) Immediate Cause:

- a) Dissatisfaction and anger against British rule had been growing among the Indians for a long time.
- b) By AD 1857, the stage was set for a massive revolt provided by as small a thing.
- c) The whole issue began as a rifle cartridge.
- d) The cartridges of rifles were covered with a greased paper cover.
- e) This greased cover had to be bitten off before the cartridge could be loaded into the rifle.
- f) The news spread that the grease was made of cow and pig fat.
- g) Hindus considered the cow as sacred and the Muslims do not eat pig's meat.
- h) Both these communities became angry because of the clear attempt to harm their religion.

- i) This incident, popularly known as the “Greased Cartridges Incident”, became the abrupt cause of the revolt.
- j) The first soldier to protest against using the greased cartridges was Mangal Pandey.
- k) He belonged to the 34th Infantry stationed at Barrackpore. He refused to use the cartridges and was afterwards hanged.
- l) On 24 April 1857, some soldiers stationed at Meerut also rejected to use the cartridges.
- m) On 9 May 1857, they were brutally punished for this.
- n) This incident resulted in a general mutiny among the sepoys of Meerut.
- o) On 10 May 1857, these rebel soldiers killed their British officers, and set free their imprisoned comrades and elevated the flag of revolt.
- p) This was the official beginning of the ‘Great Revolt’.
- q) The soldiers then marched to Delhi. On 11 May 1857, they reached Delhi. Here, they met the local infantry.
- r) The rebels took custody of Delhi and declared the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar as the emperor of India.

6 B. Question

Answer in detail:

What were the causes for the failure of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Answer

The British addressed the revolt as ‘Sepoy Mutiny’. They disregarded the mutiny as the unorganized attempt by the Indian Sepoys. The Sepoy Mutiny was a aggressive and very bloody unrest against British rule in India in 1857.

The reasons for the failure of this Great revolt were:

1) Ideological reasons

- Absence of collective mind for freedom

People were frustrated because of many reasons but they did not attain a united conscience which may have helped in contributing to the war. Most of the people in the upper strata of society behaved as though they had no regard to the freedom struggle.

- Lack of willingness to change

The privileged class and those with the consideration of the British were inflexible in their present condition. They did not realize the need for freedom.

2) Military reasons

- Strong opposition

The military force of the British was so firm that the Sepoys couldn't make a lead in the struggle. The Britishers had the provision to expand their army and also to use advanced armed techniques.

- Absence of military forces

The Indians fought from their limited provisions. But they defended as much as they could. Another reason for the failure is the disorganization of Indian army. They lacked the advantage of the modern Railways and the Telegraph but the British had it.

3) Social reasons

- No substitute to British rule

Feudalism prevailed in the British time. As divide and rule was the policy of the British, they nurtured Land Lords and tried maximum to disintegrate Indians. Therefore, the common people did not recognize the exact or obvious alternative for the system of feudalism.

- Lesser range of the revolt

The revolt did not spread to larger areas. The revolt of the sepoy spread only from Barrackpore to Meerut and thence to Delhi. It did not stretch to south or North India.

- Lack of participation of all people

The elite classes did not participate in the revolt. It was because they enjoyed the privileges from the British. The princes and the educated classes stepped back from the revolt.

4) Administrative reasons

- Lack of planning

The revolt of 1857 had an immediate reason. Even though there were numerous social, religious, political and administrative frustrations of Sepoys as reasons; the revolt burst out because of the introduction of greased cartridges to the Sepoys. The issue was a religious and emotional factor. Therefore the war came out as the unplanned shot by the Sepoys.

- Absence of adequate leadership

Hakim Ahsanullah (Chief advisor to Bahadur Shah II), Begum Hazrat Mahal, Birjis Qadir, Ahmadullah (advisor of the ex-Nawab of Awadh), Nana Sahib, Rao Sahib (nephew of Nana), Tantia Tope, Azimullah Khan (advisor of Nana Sahib) and Rani Laxmibai were the leaders of the revolt. But the areas of the revolt were scattered around a limited areas like Delhi, Lucknow, Jhansi etc, and it lacked satisfactory leadership competence.

6 C. Question

Answer in detail:

Discuss the result of the Great Revolt of 1857 and Queen Victoria's Proclamation.

Answer

The revolt of 1857 proved a turning-point for Queen Victoria herself. Throughout 1857 and 1858 India frenzied the energies of the Queen. The rebellion was suppressed easily by the British and, they turned their attention to the post-war settlement – the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the Crown.

As a result Queen Victoria's Proclamation came in November 1, 1858. On November 1, 1858, a splendid Darbar was held at Allahabad. Lord Canning sent the royal proclamation which announced that the queen had taken control of the government of India. This proclamation also affirmed the future policy of the British Rule in India.

News of the revolt in India reached London in July 1857 and at the end of the famous 'sepoy mutiny', the Queen was supposed as a court of final decision. At the same time, Victoria was a Christian queen within a European culture and involved in a heightened sense of religious difference and dominance. By the mid-1850s she had visions on the evangelical Protestant ideology of British India.

The revolt of 1857 in India came up because of the clash between religious cultures, so Queen Victoria became raised because of her Protestant passion.

Queen Victoria sought out her own channels of information about the unfolding events of 1857 revolt

- She collected details from returning officers and widows who passed through her court,
- Descriptions were taken from specially commissioned artists and photographers, and
- She also collected news from her own private correspondents in India.
- the legislation enacting the new arrangements made its way through Parliament in 1858
- The royal authority intervened to ensure that royal prerogative was upheld.

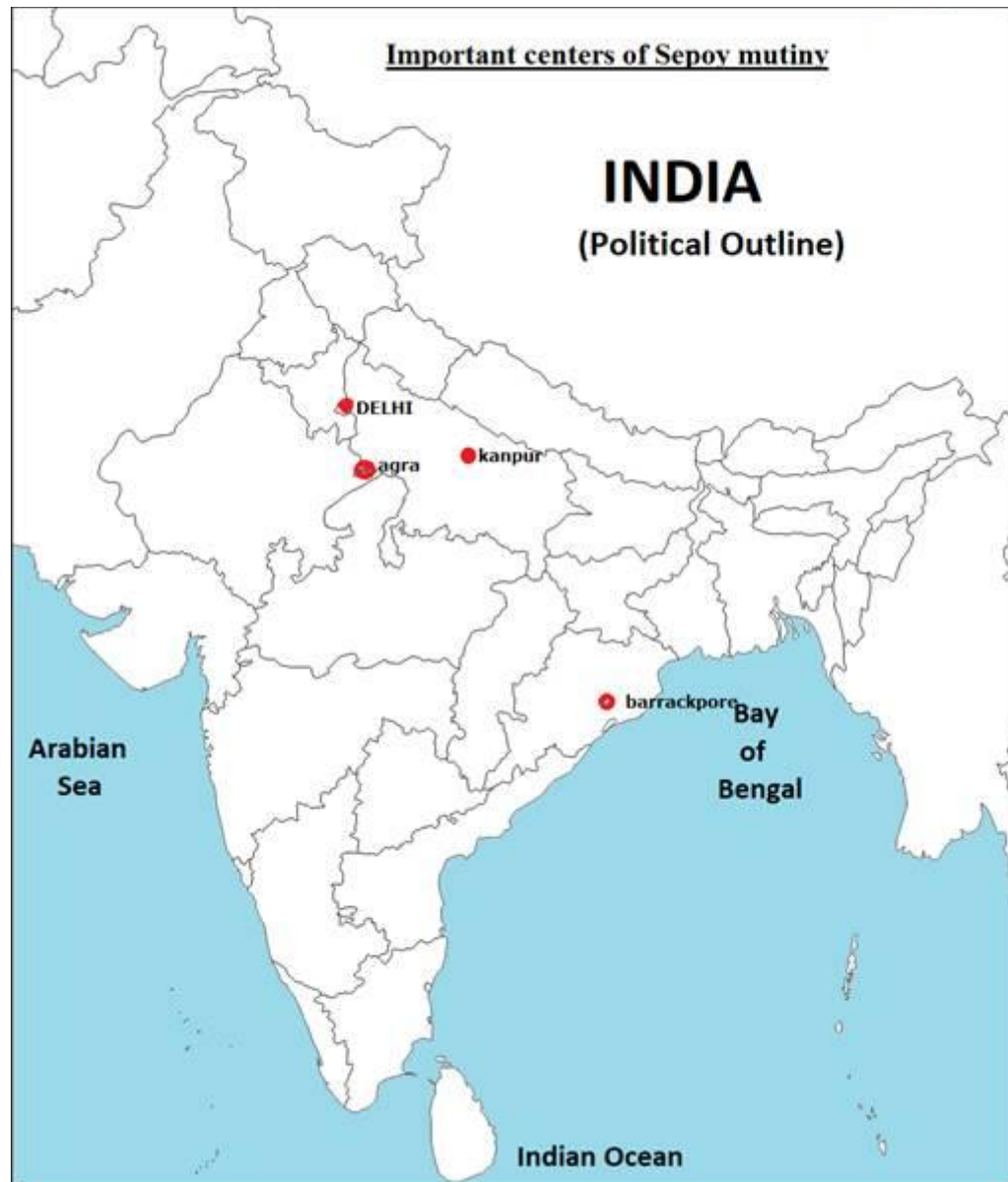
Later in 1947, at the time of independence; the cabinet of Lord Derby came to write the Proclamation explaining the transfer of power to the peoples of India. Soon, the Queen and her royal group changed fundamentally the tone and text of the document in ways which ensured it to be known as the 'Magna Carta' of Indian liberties.

Activity

1. Question

Use the outline map of India and mark the important centers of Sepoy mutiny.

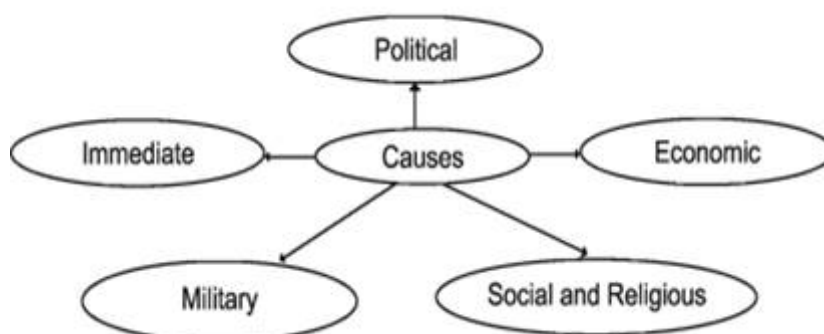
Answer



Formative Assessment

1. Question

Prepare an Indian map[on the causes of the revolt of 1857.



Answer

Causes of the revolt of 1857

Economic Causes:

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2. Question

Watch the movie " Mangal Pandey" and write a review on it.

Answer

Soon after the release of the film in 2005, the film Mangal Pandey experiences severe opposition from a few religious based parties. This proves the fact that the film is the collection of historical facts and detailing. The Bhartiya Janata Party demanded a ban on the film 'Mangal Pandey', accusing it of showing falsehood and indulging in character assassination of Mangal Pandey. The Uttar Pradesh government criticised the film for "distortion" of historical facts, and measured eligible for ban.

Mangal Pandey: The Rising (The Rising: Ballad of Mangal Pandey) is a Indian historical biographical drama. It is a film which is based on the life of Mangal Pandey, an Indian soldier known for serving to spark the Indian rebellion of 1857.

The film is directed by Ketan Mehta, produced by Bobby Bedi and with a screenplay by Farrukh Dhondy. The lead role of Mangal Pandey is played by Aamir Khan.

The film explains the rigid and cunning rule of british through the life of a sepoy (soldier of Indian origin) in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry of the company's army, who was executed by hanging for creating mutiny against company rule.

In April 1857, a large part of the Indian subcontinent is under the control of the British East India Company. The film then flashes back to four years prior. The film portraits the early life of Mangal Pandey here. While fighting in Afghanistan, Pandey saves Gordon's life by dragging him to safety when the two were targeted by Afghan snipers. Later between Gordon and Pandey a friendship is formed, disregarding rank and race.

The undiscovered love and ethics of Mangal pandey is explained through this film. The film ends with illustrations of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and footage of the later Indian independence movement.

- Viewers sense the true identity of the main character Mangal Pandey. The film explains the dark side stories of the British rule, a little more clearly.
- The movie really affects us that intensely, and we truly experience the malpractices and exploitations done by British on our motherland India. It captivates us at some level and hold us entrapped for a long period of time.

- But there are mixed reviews which explain this film as something which allow ourselves to suspend disbelief.

The film leaves behind the tendency to react positively, and allow ourselves to emotional involvement with history. The facts and truth of the revolt of 1857 cross over to our reality perception and it further influences us beyond that.

3. Question

Discuss why the Revolt of 1857 is referred to as the First war of Independence.

Answer

There are mixed opinions about the nature of the revolt of 1857, historians and sociologists observe the revolt in different ways.

- Sir John Seeley calls it a mere “Sepoy Mutiny”
- V.D. Savarkar calls it “The First War Of Independence”
- R.C. Majumdar calls it “Neither First Nor National War of Independence”.

The reasons to call it the first war of independence is:

- a) It was for the first time that our entire nation irrespective of the caste, creed, race, and religion had come together and united with armed protest.
- b) It was against the scary and strong power- the British, to gain independence from their colonial rule.
- c) It took another 90 odd years to unite and formed the organized fight against the British.
- d) It continued to inspire all Indians from past to present and remember those who sacrificed their precious lives for the freedom of our nation.
- e) The freedom revolt of 1857 was the result of many causes and also busted out because of the degradation of religious sentiments. Therefore the reaction was very at a big price.

Although the 1st war of Independence had failed, it is marked as the first attempt of Indians to show their self-respect and also patriotism. The revolt had multiple causes and multiple results as well.