



# 1857 Uprising

## Why in News

A memorial-museum is being built by the Haryana government at Ambala to honour the martyrs of the [1857 uprising](#).

- The objective of constructing a war memorial in Ambala is to **immortalise the bravery of those unsung heroes** who never got credit for scripting the first revolt (against the British).
- It will also highlight **Haryana's contribution to the freedom struggle** with a special emphasis on revolt incidents at Ambala.

## Key Points

- **About the 1857 Revolt:**
  - It was the first expression of organised resistance against the British East India Company
  - It began as a **revolt of the sepoys of the British East India Company's army** but eventually secured the participation of the masses.
  - The revolt is known by several names: **the Sepoy Mutiny** (by the British Historians), **the Indian Mutiny, the Great Rebellion** (by the Indian Historians), **the Revolt of 1857, the Indian Insurrection**, and **the First War of Independence** (by [Vinayak Damodar Savarkar](#)).

## Revolt in Haryana

- **Centre of Revolt:** According to the historian **KC Yadav**, the 1857 uprising actually started in Ambala, and not Meerut as popularly believed.
  - He had documented his findings in his book titled '**The Revolt of 1857 in Haryana**'.
- **Important Leaders:** Rao Tula Ram in Ahirwal, Gaffur Ali and Harsukh Rai in Palwal, Dhanu Singh in Faridabad, Nahar Singh in Ballabgarh etc. were the important leaders of revolt in Haryana.
- **Battles Fought:** Many battles were fought by the rulers of the states and by the farmers also, sometimes defeating the British army.
  - Some most important battles were fought at **Sirsa, Sonipat, Rohtak** and **Hissar**.
  - In Sirsa the famous **battle of Chormar** was fought.
- **Causes of Revolt:**
  - **Political Cause:**
    - **British policy of expansion:** The political causes of the revolt were the British policy of expansion through the [Doctrine of Lapse](#) and direct annexation.
      - A large number of Indian rulers and chiefs were dislodged, thus arousing fear in the minds of other ruling families who apprehended a similar fate.
    - By applying the doctrine of lapse, **Dalhousie annexed** the States of **Satara** (1848 A.D.), **Jaitpur, and Sambalpur** (1849 A.D.), **Baghat** (1850 A.D.), **Udaipur** (1852 A.D.), **Jhansi** (1853 A.D.), and **Nagpur** (1854 A.D.)

- **Social and Religious Cause:**
  - The rapidly spreading Western Civilisation in India was alarming concerns all over the country.
  - The **abolition of practices like sati and female infanticide**, and the legislation legalizing **widow remarriage**, were believed as threats to the established social structure.
  - Introducing western methods of education was directly challenging the orthodoxy for Hindus as well as Muslims
- **Economic Cause:**
  - In rural areas, peasants and zamindars were infuriated by the **heavy taxes on land** and the **stringent methods of revenue collection** has led to the losing the lands that peasants had held for generations.
    - Large numbers of **sepoys belonged to the peasantry class** and had family ties in villages, so the grievances of the peasants also affected them.
  - After the Industrial Revolution in England, there was an **influx of British manufactured goods** into India, which ruined industries, particularly the textile industry of India
    - Indian handicraft industries had to compete with cheap machine- made goods from Britain.
- **Military Causes:**
  - **Indian sepoy formed more than 87% of the British troops** in India but were considered inferior to British soldiers.
  - An Indian sepoy was paid less than a European sepoy of the same rank.
  - They were required to serve in areas far away from their homes.
  - In 1856 Lord Canning issued the **General Services Enlistment Act** which **required that the sepoy must be ready to serve even in British land across the sea.**
- **Immediate Cause:**
  - The Revolt of 1857 eventually broke out over the incident of greased cartridges.
    - A rumour spread that the **cartridges of the new Enfield rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs.**
    - Before loading these rifles the sepoy had to bite off the paper on the cartridges.
    - Both Hindu and Muslim sepoy refused to use them.

#### Centres of Revolt, Leadership and Suppression

Places of Revolt	Indian Leaders	British Officials who suppressed the revolt
Delhi	Bahadur Shah II	John Nicholson
Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal	Henry Lawrence
Kanpur	Nana Saheb	Sir Colin Campbell
Jhansi & Gwalior	Lakshmi Bai & Tantia Tope	General Hugh Rose
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan	Sir Colin Campbell
Allahabad and Banaras	Maulvi Liyakat Ali	Colonel Ocell
Bihar	Kunwar Singh	William Taylor

#### Cause of Failure of Revolt

- **Limited Uprising:** The revolt was mainly confined to the Doab region.
  - The large princely states, **Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, and Kashmir**, as well as the smaller ones of **Rajputana**, did not join the rebellion
  - The southern provinces did not take part in it.
- **No Effective Leadership:** The rebels lacked an effective leader. Although Nana Saheb, Tantia Tope and Rani Lakshmi Bai were brave leaders, they could not offer effective leadership to the

movement as a whole.

- **Limited Resources:** The rebels lacked resources in terms of men and money. The English, on the other hand, received a steady supply of men, money and arms in India.
- **No Participation of the Middle Class:** The English educated middle class, the rich merchants, traders and zamindars of Bengal helped the British to suppress the revolt.

## Outcome of Revolt

- **End of Company Rule:** The revolt marked the end of the East India Company's rule in India.
  - Lord Canning at a **Durbar in Allahabad** announced that Indian administration was taken over by Queen Victoria, which, in effect, meant the British Parliament.
- **Religious Tolerance:** It was promised and due attention was paid to the customs and traditions of India.
- **Administrative Change:** The Governor General's office was replaced by that of the Viceroy.
  - The rights of Indian rulers were recognised.
  - The Doctrine of Lapse was abolished.
  - The right to adopt sons as legal heirs was accepted.
- **Military Reorganisation:** The ratio of British officers to Indian soldiers increased but the armoury remained in the hands of the English. It was arranged to end the dominance of the Bengal army.

[Source: IE](#)

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