

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.

### **Revolt of 1857**

#### **Immediate Reason of Revolt of 1857**

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. As a result, it was believed to be the immediate factor for the revolt of 1857..

The major policies are listed below:

- Permanent Settlement in Bengal
- Mahalwari settlement in Central India & Ryotwari settlement in southern India

To know more about such important land revenue systems, check the linked article.

These three settlements were highly exploitative, and in particular, the Permanent settlement had created a devastating impact. Thus the peasants were greatly encouraged to overthrow the British Government from India which led to their active participation in the revolt of 1857.

**Military Factors** – The Indian soldiers faced a lot of discrimination from the British officials with respect to their salaries, pensions, and promotions. Indians were subjugated in the military while their European counterparts faced no such discrimination. This led to discontent and was a major military factor that resulted in the 1857 revolt.

#### **Vellore Mutiny**

The Vellore Mutiny took place even before the revolt of 1857 (50 years before). It erupted on 10th July 1806 in Vellore, present-day Tamil Nadu, and lasted only for a day, but it was brutal and it was the first major mutiny by the Indian sepoys in the East India Company.

#### **Impact of Revolt of 1857**

The revolt of 1857 shook the foundation of the British East India Company and disclosed their inefficiency in handling the Indian administration. The major impact was the introduction of the Government of India Act, 1858 which abolished the rule of the British East India Company and marked the beginning of the British Raj that bestowed powers in the hands of the British government to rule India directly through representatives.

The 1857 revolt was eventually not successful in ousting the British from the country because of several factors.

1. The sepoys lacked one clear leader; there were several. They also did not have a coherent plan by which the foreigners would be routed.
2. Indian rulers who aided the revolt did not envision any plan for the country after the British were defeated.
3. Majorly northern India was affected by this revolt. The three presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras remained mostly unaffected.

**Factor Leading to the growth of Nationalism in India.:-** Nationalism is an idea that nurtures the needs of a certain nation with the intention of attaining and sustaining the nation's sovereignty (self-governance) over its motherland. Indian nationalism evolved as a notion during the Indian independence movement which pushed for independence from British rule. Indian nationalism is an example of territorial nationalism, which is comprehensive of all of the people of India, despite their diverse cultural, rhetorical and religious backgrounds. The main reasons for the emergence of Nationalism in India are:

1. Political, Economic and Administrative Unification
2. Impact of Western Education
3. Development of means of Transport
4. Socio-religious reform movements
5. Development of Media, Newspaper and Magazines
6. Britishers' exploited Policies
7. National Movements outside India

#### **Different reasons for Indian Nationalism:-**

##### **Satyagraha as a Concept**

In 1919, nationalism was expanding into new sectors, with new social groups and tactics of struggle emerging. When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) arrived in India, he brought with him the concept of satyagraha, which emphasized the power of truth and the urgency of seeking it.

The concept emphasized the importance of truth and encouraged individuals to seek it out. Physical force, he argued, was not a necessary step in fighting the colonists. In 1916, he visited Champaran, Bihar, to persuade locals to oppose the harsh plantation system.

In 1918, Gandhi intervened in a conflict between Ahmedabad mill owners and their workers. He asked workers to go on strike and seek a salary raise of 35 per cent. This drew him closer to the public, as well as the workers.

##### **The Rowlatt Act is a Piece of Legislation passed in the Year**

After the Rowlatt Act was passed in 1919, Gandhiji lost patience and decided to use a non-cooperation movement to protest the unjust law.

The 6th of April 1919 was declared Satyagraha Day, and people all around the country fasted. On April 10th, police in Amritsar opened fire on a peaceful procession, resulting in widespread bank attacks. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre is the name given to this tragedy.

### **Movement of the Khilafat**

The Satyagraha movement was still limited to cities and towns when it became widely popular. The Khilafat movement was then founded by Mahatma Gandhi. The only way to do this was for Hindus and Muslims to come together.

Maulana Azad, Ajmal Khan, and Hasrat Mohani led the formation of a Khalifa Committee. The goal was to unite the people and instill a sense of patriotism in them.

### **The Nationalistic Feeling**

When people of various religions and communities establish a sense of collective belonging, the nationalist movement grows. A nation's identity is characterized in this way. When Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay penned 'Vande Mataram' for our homeland in 1870, he first conceived this image of Bharat Mata.

Bengal designed a tri-color (red, green, and yellow) flag during the Swadeshi Movement. It had eight lotuses, each symbolizing an individual region, as well as a crescent moon, which represented Hindus and Muslims.

### **Bengal's Swadeshi Movement**

- The Swadeshi Movement arose from Bengal's anti-partition movement.
- The decision escalated the protest meeting, resulting in the passage of a Boycott resolution in a massive meeting held in Calcutta Town Hall, as well as the formal proclamation of the Swadeshi Movement.
- The extremists dominated the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. They proposed new forms of struggle. The movement primarily advocated a boycott of foreign goods, as well as mass mobilization through public meetings and processions.
- Self-sufficiency, or 'Atma Shakti,' as well as Swadeshi education and enterprise, were emphasized.
- Several families remained active to ensure mass participation, and songs written by Rabindranath Tagore, Rajanikanta Sen, Dwijendralal Ray, Mukunda Das, and others inspired the masses in the cultural sphere.
- Soon after, the movement spread to other parts of the country, with Tilak leading in Pune and Bombay, Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh leading in Punjab, Syed Haider Raza leading in Delhi, and Chidambaram Pillai leading in Madras.

### **Bengal British India Society**

- **The Bengal British India Society** was established in 1843 with the objective of gathering and sharing information about the conditions of the people in British India. It aimed to promote the welfare, rights, and interests of all classes of subjects in India through peaceful and lawful means.
- In 1851, the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society merged to form the British Indian Association. This merger brought together the interests of landlords and the broader objective of advancing the welfare and rights of the people in British India. The formation of the British Indian Association marked a significant development in the organized political struggle in India during that time.
- The British Indian Association played a crucial role in advocating for the interests of Indians and pushing for reforms. It became one of the predecessors to the Indian National Congress (INC), which was established in 1885. The formation of the British Indian Association laid the foundation for collective political action and paved the way for further organized movements for Indian independence.
- The Bengal British India Society was founded in 1843 by the combined efforts of George Thompson, Dwarkanath Tagore, Chandra Mohan Chatterjee, and Parmananda Maitra.
- It was founded on the advice of George Thompson. He was brought to India from England by Dwarkanath Tagore.
- George Thomas was the Secretary of the British Indian Society.
- It primarily represented the aristocratic class.
- The organization's main goals were to collect and disseminate information about people's health and well-being.

### **British India Association (1851)**

- The British India Association formed in 1851 through the merger of the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society, played a significant role in Indian political activism during that time. The organization was headed by Raja Radhakant Dev as President and Debendranath Tagore as Secretary, and it had several other prominent members.
- The formation of the British India Association was prompted by the opposition of the European community in Bengal to the four bills drafted by Bethune, a law member of the British Government, in 1849. These bills aimed to extend the jurisdiction of the East India Company's criminal courts over British-born subjects. While the Indian community supported these bills, the European community protested against them, leading to their withdrawal by the government. This incident highlighted the need for a strong political organization to protect Indian interests against organized attacks by Europeans.
- purposes in the Charter Act of 1853. It worked towards structural changes in local administration and government systems, striving for the greater welfare of Indians.

### **The Moderate Phase of the Indian National Movement :-The Indian National Congress (INC)**

Formed in 1885 by Allan Octavian Hume, a retired British civil servant.

- Other founding members include Dadabhai Naoroji (Born on September 4, 1825) and Dinshaw Wacha.

- The first session was held in Bombay under the presidency of Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee in 1885.
- The first session was attended by 72 delegates from across the country.
- Viceroy of India at the time was Lord Dufferin who gave his permission to Hume for the first session.
- The Congress was formed with the intention of discussing problems faced by the people of the country irrespective of caste, creed, religion or language.
- It was basically a movement of the upper and middle class, western-educated Indians in its moderate phase.
- The second session of the Congress was held in Calcutta in 1886 followed by the third in Madras in 1887.

### Moderate phase (1885 – 1905)

- The moderate phase of the Congress (or the national movement) was dominated by the 'moderates'.
- They were people who believed in British justice and were loyal to them.

#### Prominent moderate leaders

Dadabhai Naoroji

- Known as the 'Grand old man of India.'
- He became the first Indian to become a member of the House of Commons in Britain.
- Authored 'Poverty and Un-British Rule in India' which focused on the economic drain of India because of British policies. This led to an enquiry on the matter.

Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee

- The first president of the INC.
- Lawyer by profession. First Indian to act as Standing Counsel.

G Subramania Aiyer

- Founded 'The Hindu' newspaper where he criticized British imperialism.
- Also founded Tamil newspaper 'Swadesamitran'.
- Co-founded the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

- Regarded as Mahatma Gandhi's political guru.
- Founded the Servants of India Society.

Sir Surendranath Banerjee

- Also called 'Rashtraguru' and 'Indian Burke'.
- Founded the Indian National Association which later merged with the INC.
- Cleared the Indian Civil Service but was discharged due to racial discrimination.
- Founded newspaper 'The Bengalee'.

Other moderate leaders included Rash Behari Ghosh, R C Dutt, M G Ranade, Pheroze Shah Mehta, P R Naidu, Madan Mohan Malaviya, P. Ananda Charlu, and William Wedderburn.

#### Aims and demands of the moderates

- Education of the masses and organizing public opinion, make people aware of their rights.
- Indian representation in the Executive Council and in the Indian Council in London.
- Reform of the legislative councils.
- Separation of the executive from the judiciary.
- Decreased land revenue tax and ending peasant oppression.
- After 1892, raised the slogan, "No taxation without representation."
- Reduced spending on the army.
- Abolishing salt tax and duty on sugar.
- Holding the ICS exam in India along with England to allow more Indians the opportunity to take part in the administration.

#### Methods of the moderates

- They believed in peaceful and constitutional methods to demand and fulfil those demands.
- Used petitions, meetings, resolutions, pamphlets, memoranda and delegations to voice their demands.
- Their method has been called 3P – Prayers, Petition and Protest.
- Had complete faith in the British justice system.
- Confined to the educated classes only. Did not try to employ the masses.
- They aimed only at getting political rights and self-government under British dominion.

### **Successes of the moderates**

- Indian Councils Act of 1892 was the first achievement of the INC.
- This Act increased the size of the legislative councils and also increased the proportion of non-officials in them.
- They were able to sow the seeds of nationalism in the people.
- They popularised ideals like democracy, liberty and equality.
- They exposed many draining economic policies of the British.
- Gopal Krishna Gokhale and M G Ranade were indeed social reformers who actively worked towards abolishing child marriage and promoting women's rights, including widow remarriage.