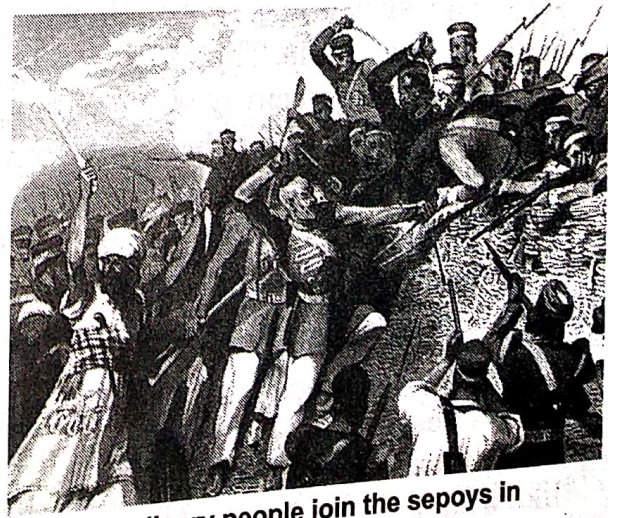


## 1. PATTERN OF THE REBELLION

### 1.1 How the mutinies began

- The Sepoys started their task with a unique signal. It was the firing of the evening gun or the sounding of the bugle at many places. They first captured the bell of arms and looted the treasury. Later they attacked and burnt government buildings, the jails, treasury, bungalows, record room, telegraph offices and records.
- White men were the target. Declaration was made in Hindi, Urdu and Persian and



Ordinary people join the sepoys in attacking the British in Lucknow.



propagated in the cities calling the Hindus and Muslims common men started to join the mutiny.

- The objects of rebel's wrath on moneylenders and the rich in major towns like Kanpur, Lucknow and Bareilly. They were considered not only as oppressors by the peasants but were also seen as allies of the British. The mutiny in the sepoy ranks swiftly became a rebellion.
- The British had no answer to the actions of the rebels during the months of May and June. They were engaged to save their life and lives of their family members. One British officer described British rule collapsed like a house made of cards.

## 1.2 Lines of Communication

- The reasons for the similarity in the pattern of mutiny at various places was its planning and coordination. There was communication between the sepoy lines of different cantonments.
- Sepoys or their secret messages communicated from one station to another. People were planning and talking about their rebellion.
- The facts were that the sepoy lived in lines and had a common life style while they belonged to the same caste. That was not difficult to imagine that they were sitting together to decide their own future. In reality, they were the makers of their own rebellion.

## 1.3 Leaders and followers

- A dynamic and strong leadership was required to fight with British. For this rebels moved to take the shelter under the umbrella of people, who had been leaders before the British conquest. As sepoys of Merrut reached Delhi and requested Mughal Emperor to accept their leadership.
- In Kanpur, the sepoys and the people of the town made a request to Nana Sahib the successor of Peshwa Baji Rao II to be their leader in revolt, Rani of Jhansi was also forced by the people and others to join the uprising. In the same way, Kunwar Singh, local zamindar in Arrah led the mutiny.
- Nawab of Awadh-Wajid Ali Shah was displaced and state was possessed. Birjis Qadr, the youngest son of Nawab was declared as their leader by the people. The messages of rebellion were conveyed by common men, women and religious men. Religious men played important role to bring awakening among the common men with their own pattern.
- Several local leaders urged the farmers, zamindars and tribals to take part in revolt. Shah Mal of pargana Barout in U.P. fickle the villagers of the Pargana. Gonoo, a tribal farmers of Singhbhum of Chhota Nagpur led the Kol tribals of that region.



Nana Sahib



Rani Lakshmi Bai, a popular image

## 1.4 Rumours and Prophecies

- Rumours and prediction played an important role to mobilise the people for action, as sepoys described the bullets coated with the cows and fat pigs to the Mughal king. The British made the efforts to make clarification. But rumours about the bullets had spread like wild fire.

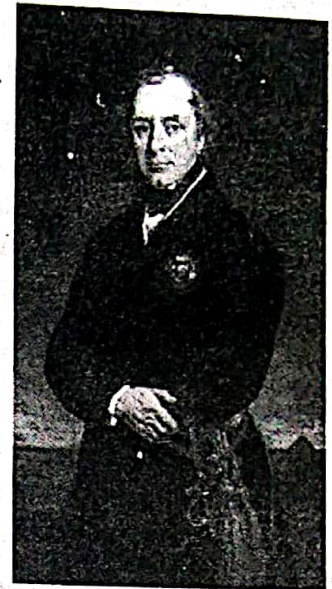


- There was a hearsay that there was a huge conspiracy of British government to defile the caste and religion of Hindus and Muslims. To get expected outcomes, the hearsay spread that British had mixed the bone dust of cows and pigs into the flour that was sold in the market in towns and cantonments. So, sepoy and the general public neglected to touch the flour.

- There was a fear and mistrust that the British wanted to convert Indians to christianity. The response to the call for action was strengthened by the prophecy that the British rule would come to an end on the centenary of the Battle of Plassey on 23 June 1857.
- Reports came from many parts of North India that chapattis were being distributed in villages. The objective and meaning of that act was not clear even to day it remained doubtful, people read it as an omen of an upheaval.

### 1.5 Why did people believe in the rumours?

- Governor General, Lord William Bentinck accepted policies that aimed at imposing reforms in the Indian society by bringing western ideas into use. They opened English medium schools colleges and universities, that taught western science and liberal arts.
- The British passed laws to abolish the customs of Sati (1829) and allowed the remarriage of Hindu widows.
- The British annexed various kingdoms—Awadh, Jhansi and Satara mentioning many places misgovernance and refusal of adoption. British implemented their own laws, methods of land settlement and land revenue collection. All these practices had cumulative effect on the people of North India.
- People cared and held respect from kings and socio religious customs to patterns of rent holdings as well as revenue payment. These were destroyed and replaced by the system which was more general, cruel and alien. Such perceptions were provoked by the actions of Christian missionaries.



Henry Hardinge, by Francis Grant, 1849

## 2. AWADH IN REVOLT

### 2.1 "A cherry that will drop into our mouth one day"

- Governor General Lord Dalhousie considered the kingdom of Awadh as "a cherry that will drop into our mouth one day".
- In 1856, Awadh kingdom was formally annexed to the British Empire. In 1801, the Subsidiary Alliance and Nawab was compelled to disband his military force and permitted British troops to take their position in the Awadh kingdom.
- Nawab could act as per the advice or direction of British Resident. Nawab was kept deprived of his army, he became augmently dependent on British to uphold the law and order within the state of Awadh.
- Nawab was not in condition to maintain control over the rebellious chiefs and Taluqdars. An interest was awoken in Britishers to capture the territory of Awadh. The soil was good for the production of Indigo and cotton.
- The major areas of India were overcome by the British by the early 1850s. The areas were included in the Maratha lands, the doab, the Carnatic, the Punjab and Bengal.
- The annexation of Awadh in 1856 was assumed to furnish the process of territorial annexation had started with the victory of the Bengal more than 100 years ago.



## 2.2 'The life was gone out of the body'

- Annexations which was done by Lord Dalhousie's created disloyalty in all the areas and principalities were much more in the kingdom of Awadh that was known as the heart of North India. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was dethroned and banished to Calcutta. British excused that the state was misgoverned.
- British government wrongly supposed that Nawab had become unpopular ruler whether he was loved extensively. People showed their lamentation by their song when they followed the Nawab on the way upto Kanpur from Lucknow.
- Someone quoted: The life was gone out of the body and the body of this town had been left up lifeless—Each and every street a market and house was lamented.
- The court of Awadh as well as its culture was dissipated with the removal of the Nawab, large number of people had lost their livelihood, musicians, dancers, poets, artisans, cooks, retainers, administrative officials etc. were included.

## 2.3 Firangi raj and the end of a world

- A chain of hardship in Awadh was linked with prince, Taluqdar, peasant and sepoy. The revenue become an expression of popular resistance to an alien order.
- The annexation of Awadh displaced the Nawab. It also dispossessed the Taluqdars of this regions. The rural areas of Awadh was dotted with the forts and estates of Taluqdars.
- The British were not ready to tolerate the power of the Taluqdars. After annexation of Awadh the Taluqdars were disarmed and their forts were destroyed.
- The British land revenue policy was greatly undermined the power and authority of Taluqdars. The first British revenue settlement was known as the summary settlement of 1856. It was based on the assumption that the Taluqdars were intruder. They had no permanent stake in land.
- British had setup their hold over land with the help of force and fraud. Revenue settlement led to removal of Taluqdars wherever possible. The taluqdars of southern Awadh were hit the hardest. They lost a large number of villages.
- British officers supposed to settle the land with the actual owners of the soil and peasants exploitation would be minimised but it could not happen in practice. Burden of revenue demand on the farmers was not declined.
- Entire social order breakdown by the dispossession of taluqdars. The ties of patronage and loyalty that had bounded to the peasant to the taluqdars were disrupted. Before British age the taluqdars were oppressed but some of them looked to be kind father figures.
- Taluqdars accured a number of dues from the peasants. They helped them in need. Now, under the British rule the peasants were exposed directly to over assessment of revenue and rigid methods of revenue collection.
- During revolt of 1857, the resistance was intense and long lasting in the Awadh state. The fighting was carried out by the taluqdars and their farmers. Several taluqdars were loyal to the Nawab, so they joined Begum Hazrat Mahal, few were remained with her in defeat.
- Dissatification of the farmers was carried over into the sepoy lines because a great majority of sepoys were recruited from the villages of Awadh. The sepoys were not satisfied with the low wages and difficulty of getting leave. There were other causes for their discontent by 1850s.
- The relationship of the sepoys with their senior white officers underwent an important change in the years preceding the uprising of 1857.
- In 1840, it started a change. The officers had developed a sense of higher authority and began to treat the sepoys as their racial inferiors, riding roughshod over their sensibilities. Abuse and physical violence became common. All these created a great moat between sepoys and officers.



### 3. WHAT THE REBELS WANTED

- Some rebels had the opportunity to record their version of events. Many of them were sepoys and common people, they were not literate.
- Some proclamations and ishtahars were issued by rebel leaders to expand their ideas and convinced the people to join the revolt.

#### 3.1 The vision of Unity

- The rebel proclamations in 1857 appealed to all groups of the population irrespective of their creed and caste. Mostly the predominations were released by Muslims princes or in their names. These proclamations addressed the sentiments of Hindus.
- Rebellion was seen as a war in which Hindus and Muslims both had equally to lose or gain. The ishtahars tried to get back to the Pre-British Hindu-Muslim past and glorified the coexistence of various communities under the Mughal Empire.
- Appealing proclamation was issued for the people to join the fight. Under the standard of Hindu and Muslim, by Bahadur Shah. British made efforts to create religious division among Hindus and Muslims, but it was hardly seen during uprising.
- In Bareilly, Western Uttar Pradesh, British spent Rs. 50,000 to incite the Hindus populations against the Muslims but it could not succeed.

#### 3.2 Against the symbols of oppression

- The proclamations were entirely discarded that was related with *firangi raj*, as people called it. They seasoned the British for the annexations they had carried out and treaties were broken.
- British land revenue settlements had dislodged the land holders whether they were big or small. Foreign trade had driven artisans and weavers to ruin.
- Every aspect of British rule was invaded and the firangi were charged of destroying set ways of life. The rebels wanted to restore their previous world.
- British were bent to destroy the caste and religions of Hindus and Muslims and converted the people to christianity. People insisted to come together and fight to save their livelihood, their faith, their honour, their identify, for the greater public sake.
- Rebel put on fire the account books and plundered the money lenders houses. This reflected an effort to overturn traditional hierarchies, rebel against all the oppressors.
- It presented a glimpse of an alternative vision probably a more egalitarian society. It was not articulated in the proclamations that was sought to unify all social groups to fight against firangi raj.

#### 3.3 The Search for alternative power

- As the British rule collapsed the rebels took the steps to establish some kind of authority and administration in various places like Delhi, Lucknow, and Kanpur. They took the help of old courts.
- Appointments were made to different post. Arrangements were made for the collection of land revenue and payments of army. Orders were released to stop loot and plunder. Side by side plans were made to fight battles against the British.
- The structures that were setup by the rebels were initially aimed at meeting the demands of war. In many cases such structures could not restore. In Awadh, resistance was maintained against British lasted.

### 4. REPRESSION

- The British passed a chain of laws to help them to suppress the insurgency. By a number of Acts were passed in May and June 1857. Entire North-India was brought under the martial law.



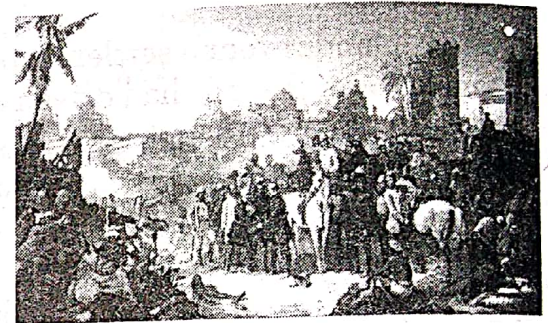
- Military officers and ordinary Britons were given the authority to try and punish Indian suspects of rebellion. Only one punishment to be given, that was only death.
- British started to work of suppressing the revolt like the rebels, they identified the symbolic value of Delhi. The British, mounted a two pronged attack from Calcutta and other from the Punjab.
- Attempts were made to recover Delhi in early June 1857 but succeeded in late September 1857. Progress of British reconquest was slow. The area village by village was reconquered by the forces.
- Great landlords and farmers of Uttar Pradesh resisted the British collectively. British played a trick to break up the unity and kept their wards to give back their estates. Landlords who stayed loyal were rewarded and rebel landlords were displaced.
- Many landlords died during fighting the British. Some of them ran to Nepal where they died of illness or starvation.

## 5. IMAGES OF THE REVOLT

- The stories of the revolt were published in British newspapers and magazines. Violence of the mutineers inflamed the feelings of common people and provoked demands of retribution and revenge.
- One important record of the mutiny is the pictorial images produced by the British and Indians paintings pencil drawings, etchings, posters, cartoons, bazaar, prints about the revolt are available.

### 5.1 Celebrating the saviours

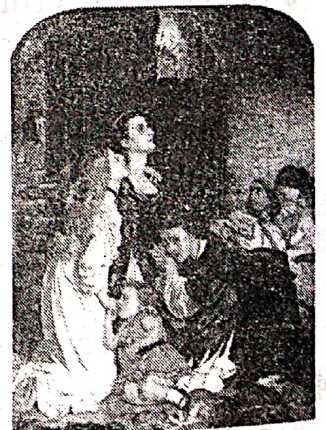
- British pictures offer different images which were meant to excite a range of various emotions and responses. British heroes, who saved the English and repressed the rebels, were publicly honoured or celebrated.
- The painting 'Relief of Lucknow' that was painted by Thomas Jones Barker in 1859 is an example of this type.
- Barker's painting celebrate the moment of Campbell's entry. In the middle of canvas, British heroes—Campbell, Outram and Havelock are shown. Heroes stand on a ground. Damaged Residency also seen in back ground.
- The dead and injured are in the foreground. The triumphant figures of horses are seen in the middle ground.



"Relief of Lucknow", painted by  
Thomas Jones Barker, 1859

### 5.2 English women and the honour of Britain

- Newspaper exert a direct impact on the public imagination. They had a unique power to shape feelings and attitudes to event. People were inflamed by the incidents of violence against women and children. Public in Britain demanded for revenge and retribution.
- British artists symbolised and shaped the sentiments by their visual props of suffering and trauma. After two years of Mutiny 'In Memoriam' Joseph Noel Paton painted this picture. English women and children huddled in a circle. They are looking helpless and innocent, seemingly waiting for the inevitable violence, dishonour and death.
- It stirs up the spectator's imagination and seeks to irritate anger and fury. It shows the rebels as violent and brutish whenever they are not seen in the picture.



"In Memoriam",  
by Joseph Noel Paton,  
1859.



- In another set of paintings and sketchers women are visualised in a different light. Women in this painting are appearing heroic, defending themselves from an attack of rebels.
- Here Miss Wheeler stands firmly at the centre, defending her honour single handedly killing the attacking rebels.
- This painting represented as a deep religious connotation. As it was a battle to save the honour of Christianity. The holy book, Bible is lying on the floor.



Miss Wheeler defending herself against sepoys in Kanpur

### 5.3 Vengeance and retribution

- Waves of anger and shock were spread in Britain. Demands for retribution were grown loudly. Pictures, Paintings and news about the mutiny generated a condition in which violent, repression and vengeance were seen important.
- There were many pictures and cartoons in the British press. They sanctioned cruel repression and violent reprisal.

### 5.4 The Performance of Terror

- Cruelty was opted by British for vengeance and retribution. By this act rebels were punished by capital punishment as they were blown from guns or hanged from the gallows. Pictures and images of such executions were circulated through popular journals widely.

### 5.5 No time for Clemency

- The cartoons were published in the pages of Punch, a British journal of comic satire. Canning was shown as a looming father figure.
- His protective hands were over the head of sepoy. He holds sword in one hand and a dagger in the other. Both were dripped with blood.

### 5.6 Nationalist imageries

- The national movement of twentieth century had drawn inspiration from the rebellion of 1857. The rebellion was considered as the first struggle for freedom in which, all these actions of the people of India came together to fight against the imperial rule.
- Writing of history, art, and literature helped in keeping alive the memory of 1857. The rebel leaders were mentioned as heroes who were leading the country in to the battle.
- These leaders were rousing the people to righteous indignation against the British rule. A number of poems were written about the bravery of the queen who fought for the freedom with a sword in one hand and the ruins of her



Justice, Punch, 12 September 1857

The caption at the bottom reads "The news of the terrible massacre at Cawnpore (Kanpur) produced an outburst of fiery indignation and wild desire for revenge throughout the whole of England."



Films and posters have helped create the image of Rani Lakshmi Bai as a masculine warrior

horse in the other.

- Rani Laxshmi Bai of Jhansi was represented as a masculine figure chasing the enemy, killing the British Jawans and courageous fighting till her last.
- Children in different parts of country grow up reading the lines of Subhdra Kumari Chauhan “khoob lari mardani woh to Jhansi wali rani thi”.