

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES • PRELIMS • GS PAPER I

Modern Indian History Summary Notes

From the arrival of the Europeans to Independence in 1947: every Prelims fact in crisp, checkable sentences, with flowcharts, tables and verified PYQs.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

21 chapters • 7 units • 110 Prelims PYQs 2011–2026 • 58 flowcharts & diagrams



Modern Indian History: Summary Notes

For UPSC Prelims and GS Paper I

2027 Edition · Compiled October 2026 · Compiled by Arvind KrS

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Contents

UNIT I	Europeans and the British Conquest	5
01	Advent of the Europeans and the Anglo-French Struggle	6
02	British Conquest of Bengal, Mysore and the Marathas	15
03	Expansion and Consolidation: Policies, Annexations and Frontiers	26
04	Governors-General and Viceroy: Who Did What	37
UNIT II	The Colonial State: Constitution, Administration and Economy	49
05	Constitutional Development, 1773–1858	50
06	Constitutional Development, 1858–1947	61
07	Administration under the Company and the Crown	74
08	Land Revenue and the Economic Impact of British Rule	84
09	Education, Press and Literature under British Rule	97
UNIT III	Resistance and the Revolt of 1857	110
10	Popular Uprisings: Civil, Tribal and Peasant Movements	111
11	The Revolt of 1857	122
UNIT IV	Socio-Religious Reform	135
12	Socio-Religious Reform Movements	136
13	Caste, Women and Social Legislation	148
UNIT V	The National Movement, 1858–1918	160
14	Rise of Nationalism, the Congress and the Moderates	161
15	Partition of Bengal, Swadeshi and the Extremists	173
16	Revolutionaries, the First World War and Home Rule	185
UNIT VI	The Gandhian Era and Independence	196
17	Gandhi's Rise and the Non-Cooperation Movement	197
18	The 1920s: Swarajists, Revolutionaries and Purna Swaraj	212

19	Civil Disobedience to the Second World War, 1930–1939	224
20	Towards Freedom and Partition, 1939–1947	236
UNIT VII Other Strands and Quick Revision		252
21	Other Strands and Quick-Revision Compendium	253

UNIT I

4 CHAPTERS

Europeans and the British Conquest

Arrival of the European companies, the Anglo-French struggle, the conquest of Bengal, Mysore, the Marathas and Punjab, British policies towards Indian states, and the Governors-General and Viceroy.

CHAPTERS

01	Advent of the Europeans and the Anglo-French Struggle	6
02	British Conquest of Bengal, Mysore and the Marathas	15
03	Expansion and Consolidation: Policies, Annexations and Frontiers	26
04	Governors-General and Viceroy: Who Did What	37

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS UNIT

01 Advent of the Europeans and the Anglo-French Struggle

Why Europe Looked for a Sea Route · The Portuguese · The Dutch · The English East India Company · The Danes and Other Companies · The French · The Carnatic Wars · Why the English Succeeded

02 British Conquest of Bengal, Mysore and the Marathas

India on the Eve of Conquest · Bengal under the Nawabs · Siraj-ud-Daula and Plassey · Mir Jafar, Mir Qasim and Buxar · The Diwani and Dual Government · Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan · The Anglo-Mysore Wars · The Anglo-Maratha Wars · Why the Indian Powers Lost

03 Expansion and Consolidation: Policies, Annexations and Frontiers

From Ring Fence to Paramountcy · Wellesley's Subsidiary Alliance · Lord Hastings and the Princes · Dalhousie and the Doctrine of Lapse · Annexation of Awadh, 1856 · The Conquest of Sindh · Ranjit Singh and the Sikh Wars · Nepal, Burma and the North-East · Afghanistan, Tibet and Bhutan · Annexations at a Glance

04 Governors-General and Viceroy: Who Did What

How the Title Changed · Governors of Bengal, 1757–74 · Governors-General of Bengal · Governors-General of India, 1833–58 · Viceroy, 1858–1905 · Viceroy, 1905–1947 · Reforms by Theme · Commissions and Ministers · Firsts, Lasts and Nicknames

MODERN INDIAN HISTORY

PRELIMS · GS PAPER I

Advent of the Europeans and the Anglo–French Struggle

In 1498 three small Portuguese ships anchored near Calicut and opened a direct sea route from Europe to India. Within two centuries the Portuguese, Dutch, English, Danes and French had all built factories along India's coasts, and by 1763 only the English were left in the race for power. Prelims questions on this period test exact firsts, dates, places and the rulers who granted land, so this chapter is built as a set of short, checkable facts.

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS

History of India and Indian National Movement

MAINS · GS PAPER I

Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present - significant events, personalities, issues

CONTENTS

01	Why Europe Looked for a Sea Route	02	The Portuguese
03	The Dutch	04	The English East India Company
05	The Danes and Other Companies	06	The French
07	The Carnatic Wars	08	Why the English Succeeded
09	Previous Year Questions		

This chapter covers:

- why Europeans sought a sea route to India, and the Portuguese empire of the sixteenth century;
- the Dutch, English, Danish and French companies: their first factories, grants and headquarters;
- the farmans and land grants that built English power, up to Farrukhsiyar's farman of 1717;
- the three Carnatic Wars and why the English, not the French, won.

The conquest of Bengal, Mysore and the Maratha territories follows in Chapter 2.

01

Why Europe Looked for a Sea Route

- Spices, pepper, indigo, cotton cloth and silk from Asia fetched huge profits in Europe; **pepper** was the most prized item.
- The **Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453**, and the land and Red Sea routes passed under Arab and Turkish control.
- Venice and Genoa held the Mediterranean end of this trade, so Portugal and Spain wanted a route of their own.
- Better ships (the caravel), the magnetic compass, the astrolabe and ship-borne cannon made long ocean voyages possible.
- **Bartholomew Dias** rounded the Cape of Good Hope in **1487–88**; **Columbus**, looking for India, reached America in **1492**.

02

The Portuguese



Vasco da Gama



Afonso de Albuquerque



Basilica of Bom Jesus, Goa

Fig. 1.1 The founder of the sea route, the architect of the Portuguese empire, and the Goa church that holds the body of St Francis Xavier.

Arrival and First Governors

- **Vasco da Gama** reached **Calicut on 20 May 1498** (landing near Kappad), guided across the Arabian Sea by a Gujarati pilot from Malindi; the **Zamorin** (Samudri) of Calicut received him.
- His cargo is said to have sold for about **60 times** the cost of the voyage. He came again in **1502** and returned as Viceroy in 1524, dying at Cochin that year.
- **Pedro Alvares Cabral** (1500) set up factories at Calicut and Cochin; Cannanore followed in 1502.
- **Francisco de Almeida** (1505–09), the first Viceroy, followed the **"Blue Water Policy"**: control the sea, not land. He defeated a combined fleet of Egypt, Gujarat and the Zamorin at the **Battle of Diu (1509)**.
- **Afonso de Albuquerque** (1509–15), the real founder of Portuguese power, **captured Goa from the Bijapur Sultanate** (Yusuf Adil Shah) in **1510**. He also took Malacca (1511) and Hormuz (1515).
- Albuquerque encouraged Portuguese men to marry Indian women and **banned sati** in Goa.
- Vijayanagara's **Krishnadevaraya**, an ally against Bijapur, allowed the Portuguese to build a **fort at Bhatkal**.
- **Nino da Cunha** moved the capital from Cochin to **Goa in 1530**. **Bahadur Shah of Gujarat**, seeking help against the Mughal Humayun, gave them **Bassein (1534)** and allowed a fort at **Diu (1535)**; Daman followed in 1559.

Rule, Religion and Legacy

- Asian ships had to buy a **cartaz** (pass) from the Portuguese; ships without one could be seized.
- **St Francis Xavier**, a **co-founder of the Jesuit Order**, reached Goa in **1542**. He **died on Shangchuan Island off China (1552)**, not in Goa; his body lies in the **Basilica of Bom Jesus**, and his feast is held in Goa every **3 December**.
- The **Goa Inquisition** began in **1560**; the first printing press in India was set up in Goa in **1556**.
- Shah Jahan expelled the Portuguese from **Hooghly in 1632**; the Marathas under Chimaji Appa took **Bassein in 1739**.
- **Bombay** passed to England in **1661** as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza on her marriage to Charles II.
- Goa, Daman and Diu stayed Portuguese until India took them back in **1961**.

REMEMBER: WHAT THE PORTUGUESE BROUGHT

Crops from the Americas reached India through the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: **tobacco, red chillies, potato, maize, pineapple, papaya, guava and cashew**. Gothic church architecture and the printing press also came with them. **The English introduced none of these**; field artillery had come earlier with Babur, and soil-based land revenue assessment goes back to Sher Shah and Todar Mal.

03 The Dutch

- The **Dutch East India Company (VOC)** was formed in **1602**, two years after the English company, but the Dutch **reached India before the English**.
- First Dutch factory: **Masulipatnam (1605)**, in Golconda territory. Their early east-coast factories rested on grants from Golconda and from the Nayaks of the Vijayanagara successor state, **not on grants from the Gajapati rulers** of Odisha.
- **Pulicat** (1610; Fort Geldria) was the first headquarters; it moved to **Nagapatnam** in 1690. Other factories: Surat, Chinsura (Bengal), Cassimbazar, Patna, Balasore and Cochin.
- The Dutch cared more for the spice islands of Indonesia; Indian textiles were mainly used to buy spices there.
- The **Amboyna massacre (1623)** pushed the English out of Indonesia and turned them towards India.
- Travancore's **Marthanda Varma** defeated the Dutch at **Colachel (1741)**, one of the earliest defeats of a European power by an Indian kingdom.
- The English defeated them at **Bedara (Chinsura), 1759**, ending Dutch ambitions in India.

04 The English East India Company

The company began as "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies", chartered by **Queen Elizabeth I on 31 December 1600** with a **15-year** monopoly of eastern trade.

- **William Hawkins** reached Jahangir's court in **1609** but won no lasting concession.
- After **Thomas Best** beat a Portuguese fleet at **Swally (Suvali), 1612**, Jahangir allowed a factory at **Surat (1613)**, the first permanent English factory.
- **Sir Thomas Roe**, ambassador of James I, stayed at Jahangir's court in **1615–19** and won rights to trade across the Mughal empire.
- Subordinate factories under Surat soon came up at **Agra, Ahmedabad and Broach**, all in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.
- On the east coast the first factory was **Masulipatnam (1611)**; the **"Golden Farman" (1632)** of the Sultan of Golconda allowed duty-free trade in Golconda's ports.



Fig. 1.2 Fort St George, Madras, the first English fort in India (1639–44), in an eighteenth-century painting.

Madras, Bombay and Calcutta

- **Madras (1639)**: **Francis Day** leased the site from **Damarla Venkatadri Nayak**, a representative of the Vijayanagara ruler at Chandragiri, and built **Fort St George**.
- **Bombay (1668)**: Charles II leased it to the company for **£10 a year**; it replaced Surat as headquarters on the west coast in **1687**.
- **Bengal**: Hariharpur (Odisha, 1633), Hooghly (1651, with Shah Shuja's leave), Cassimbazar, Patna.
- The company's war with Aurangzeb (**1686–90**) went badly; **Job Charnock** then settled at **Sutanuti in 1690**. The zamindari of **Sutanuti, Kalikata and Govindpur (1698)** grew into **Calcutta**, guarded by **Fort William**.

YEAR	GRANT OR FARMAN	WHAT IT GAVE THE ENGLISH
1613	Jahangir	Permanent factory at Surat
1632	"Golden Farman", Sultan of Golconda	Duty-free trade in Golconda's ports for a fixed payment
1639	Damarla Venkatadri Nayak (Vijayanagara)	Site of Madras; Fort St George built
1651	Shah Shuja (Bengal subahdar)	Trade in Bengal for ₹3,000 a year

YEAR	GRANT OR FARMAN	WHAT IT GAVE THE ENGLISH
1661/1668	Charles II	Bombay (dowry of 1661, leased to the company 1668)
1717	Farrukhsiyar	Duty-free trade in Bengal for ₹3,000 a year; dastaks; right to rent land near Calcutta

CONCEPT: FARRUKHSIYAR'S FARMAN, THE "MAGNA CARTA" OF THE COMPANY

The **Surman Embassy** (1715–17) won from Emperor **Farrukhsiyar** the farman of **1717**. It let the company trade in Bengal without customs duty for **₹3,000** a year, issue **dastaks** (passes) for its goods, and use the Mughal mint at Murshidabad. Company servants misused the dastaks for their private trade, which became a lasting quarrel with the Nawabs of Bengal (Chapter 2).

05 The Danes and Other Companies

The **Danish East India Company** was formed in **1616**. Its settlements were **Tranquebar** (Tamil Nadu, 1620) and **Serampore** (Bengal, 1755).

The Danes were more important for missionary work than for trade. The Baptist missionaries **William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward** worked from Serampore, where their press printed Bible translations in many Indian languages.

The Danes **sold all their Indian settlements to the English in 1845**. An Ostend Company (Flanders) and a Swedish company also traded briefly in the eighteenth century.



Fig. 1.3 Dansborg Fort at Tranquebar (Tharangambadi), built by the Danes in 1620.

06 The French

- The **Compagnie des Indes Orientales** was set up in **1664** under Louis XIV's minister **Colbert**. Unlike the English company, it was **financed and controlled by the state**.
- First French factory: **Surat (1668)**, founded by **François Caron**; then **Masulipatnam (1669)**.
- **Pondicherry (1674)**: **François Martin** founded it on land from Sher Khan Lodi, the Bijapur governor of Valikondapuram. The Dutch held it from 1693 until the **Treaty of Ryswick (1697)** returned it.
- **Chandernagore** (1690–92) in Bengal was granted by the Mughal governor Shaista Khan. Later came **Mahe** (1725), **Yanam** (1731) and **Karaikal** (1739).
- **Dupleix**, Governor from 1742, began interfering in the succession quarrels of Indian states to win territory and revenue. The English soon copied his method.

The Carnatic Wars

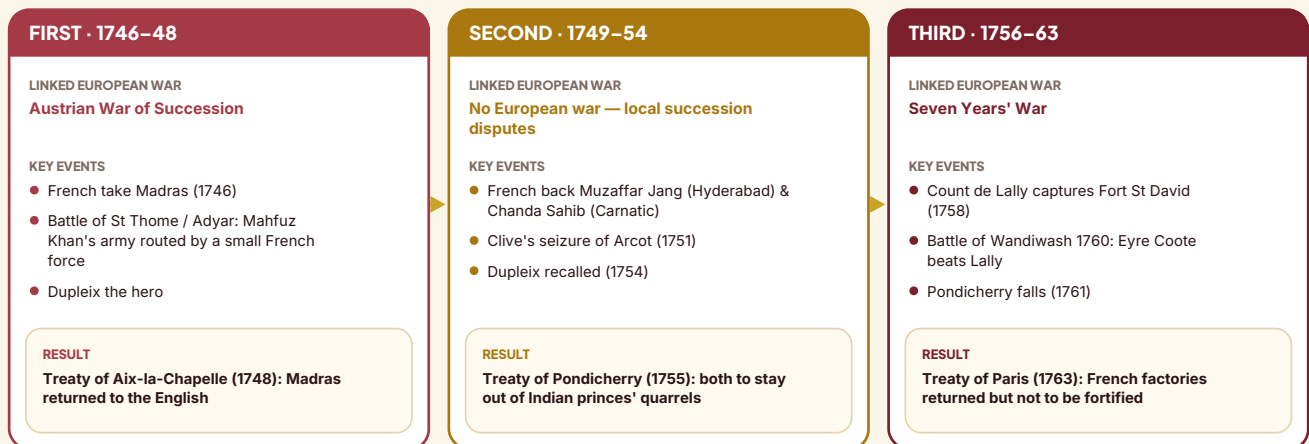
Between 1746 and 1763 the English and French fought three wars in the Carnatic (the Coromandel coast and its hinterland). The Nawab of the Carnatic was nominally under the Nizam of Hyderabad, and disputed successions in both states gave the two companies their chance.



Fig. 1.4 Joseph François Dupleix, Governor of Pondicherry (1742–54).

The Three Carnatic Wars: Anglo–French Struggle in South India

Each war in India mirrored a war in Europe; succession disputes in the Carnatic and Hyderabad gave the excuse.



Outcome: the English emerged as the leading European power in India; Wandiwash ended French political hopes.

Fig. 1.5 The three Carnatic Wars: the European war behind each, its key events and its result.

- **First war (1746–48):** the French under La Bourdonnais took **Madras**. At **St Thome (on the Adyar), 1746**, a small French force routed the large army of Nawab **Anwaruddin** under his son Mahfuz Khan. This showed how well-drilled European infantry could defeat much bigger Indian armies. The **Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748)** gave Madras back to the English.
- **Second war (1749–54):** the French backed **Muzaffar Jang** (Hyderabad) and **Chanda Sahib** (Carnatic); Anwaruddin fell at **Ambur (1749)**. **Robert Clive's capture of Arcot (1751)** turned the war, and the English candidate **Muhammad Ali** became Nawab. Dupleix was recalled in 1754, and the **Treaty of Pondicherry (1755)** ended the fighting.

- **Third war (1756–63)**, part of the Seven Years' War: **Count de Lally** took Fort St David (1758), but **Sir Eyre Coote** crushed him at **Wandiwash (22 January 1760)**, capturing Bussy. Pondicherry fell in **1761**.
- The **Treaty of Paris (1763)** returned the French factories, but they could **not be fortified**; French political power in India was over.

08 Why the English Succeeded

How the Europeans Came: Companies, Firsts and Footholds

Arrival order: Portuguese → Dutch → English → Danes → French. Company formation order: English (1600) before Dutch (1602).

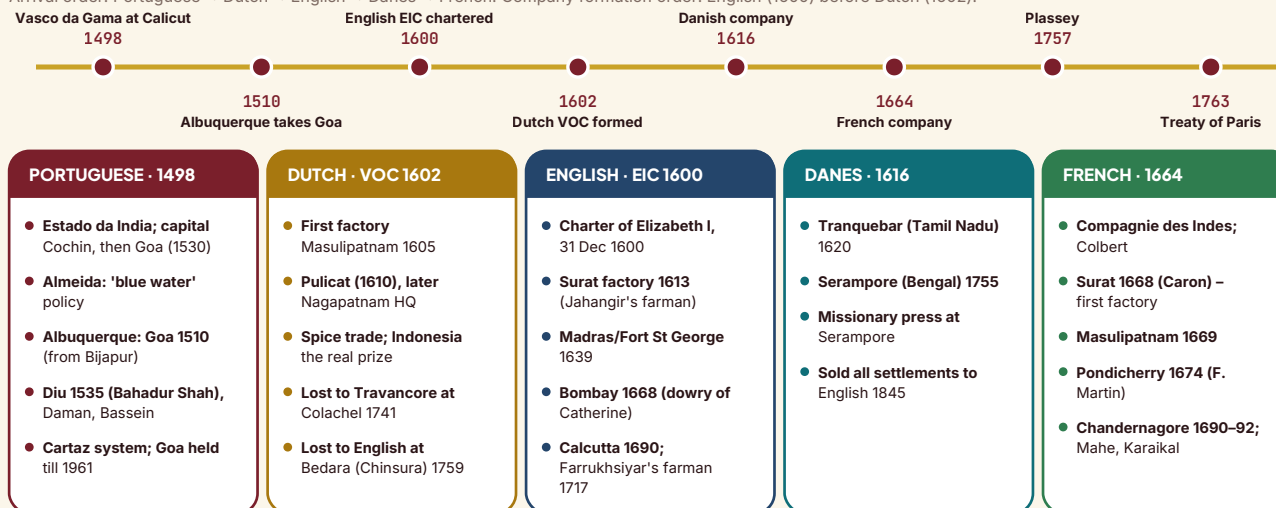


Fig. 1.6 The European companies in order of arrival, with their first footholds and later fortunes.

- **Company structure:** a private company run by shareholders, not a state-controlled body.
- **Naval power:** the Royal Navy could cut off French reinforcements.
- **Bengal's wealth:** after Plassey (1757), Bengal paid for the Carnatic war.
- **Finance:** the Bank of England and a strong credit market backed the company.
- **Trade first:** the English stayed focused on profit; the Portuguese spent energy on religion.
- **Leaders:** Clive, Coote and Lawrence were backed from London; Dupleix was recalled.
- **Bases:** three presidency towns (Madras, Bombay, Calcutta) against one French centre.
- **Europe:** France fought wars on land in Europe; Britain could put its strength into the sea.

COMMON CONFUSION: PRELIMS TRAPS IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Order of arrival:** Portuguese, Dutch, English, Danes, French. **Order of company formation:** English (1600), Dutch (1602), Danes (1616), French (1664).
- **First factories:** English at Surat (1613, permanent) but Masulipatnam (1611) on the east coast; Dutch at Masulipatnam (1605); French at Surat (1668).
- Goa was taken from **Bijapur**, not from Vijayanagara or Gujarat; Diu came from **Bahadur Shah of Gujarat**.

- Madras came from a **Vijayanagara Nayak**; Pondicherry from a **Bijapur governor**; Chandernagore from the **Mughal governor** of Bengal.
- Colachel (1741) beat the **Dutch**; Bedara (1759) also beat the **Dutch**; Wandiwash (1760) beat the **French**.



Previous Year Questions



2025

Consider the following fruits :

- I. Papaya
- II. Pineapple
- III. Guava

How many of the above were introduced in India by the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

- ☐ a Only one
 ☐ b Only two
 ☒ c All the three
 ☐ d None

Answer: (c). Papaya, pineapple and guava, all American fruits, reached India through the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Section 02).

2024

Who of the following rulers of medieval India gave permission to the Portuguese to build a fort at Bhatkal?

- ☒ a Krishnadevaraya
 ☐ b Narasimha Saluva
 ☐ c Muhammad Shah III
 ☐ d Yusuf Adil Shah

Answer: (a). Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara, an ally of the Portuguese against Bijapur, allowed them to build a fort at Bhatkal (Section 02).

2023

Who among the following rulers of medieval Gujarat surrendered Diu to Portuguese?

- ☐ a Ahmad Shah
 ☐ b Mahmud Begarha
 ☒ c Bahadur Shah
 ☐ d Muhammad Shah

Answer: (c). Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, seeking Portuguese help against Humayun, allowed them a fort at Diu (1535); they kept it after his death in 1537 (Section 02).

2022

With reference to Indian history, consider the following statements:

1. The Dutch established their factories/warehouses on the east coast on lands granted to them by Gajapati rulers.
2. Alfonso de Albuquerque captured Goa from the Bijapur Sultanate.
3. The English East India Company established a factory at Madras on a plot of land leased

from a representative of the Vijayanagara empire.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

☐ a 1 and 2 only

☒ b 2 and 3 only

☐ c 1 and 3 only

☐ d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b). Albuquerque took Goa from Bijapur (1510) and Madras (1639) was leased from a Vijayanagara Nayak; the Dutch east-coast factories were not on Gajapati grants (Sections 03 and 04).

2021

In the first quarter of seventeenth century, in which of the following was/were the factory/factories of the English East India Company located?

1. Broach
2. Chicacole
3. Trichinopoly

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

☒ a 1 only

☐ b 1 and 2

☐ c 3 only

☐ d 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Broach was one of the early factories under Surat (1613); Chicacole and Trichinopoly came much later (Section 04).

2021

Consider the following statements :

1. St. Francis Xavier was one of the founding members of the Jesuit Order.
2. St. Francis Xavier died in Goa and a church is dedicated to him there.
3. The Feast of St. Francis Xavier is celebrated in Goa each year.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

☐ a 1 and 2 only

☐ b 2 and 3 only

☒ c 1 and 3 only

☐ d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c). Xavier co-founded the Jesuits and his feast is held in Goa every 3 December, but he died on Shangchuan Island off China; only his body lies in Goa (Section 02).

2012

Consider the following:

1. Assessment of land revenue on the basis of nature of the soil and the quality of crops
2. Use of mobile cannons in warfare
3. Cultivation of tobacco and red chillies

Which of the above was/were introduced into India by the English?

☐ a 1 only

☐ b 1 and 2

☐ c 2 and 3

☒ d None

Answer: (d). None came with the English: soil-based assessment predates them (Sher Shah, Todar Mal), field artillery came with Babur, and tobacco and chillies came through the Portuguese (Section 02).

UNIT III

2 CHAPTERS

Resistance and the Revolt of 1857

Civil, tribal and peasant uprisings, and the Revolt of 1857: causes, course, leaders, failure and consequences.

CHAPTERS

10	Popular Uprisings: Civil, Tribal and Peasant Movements	111
11	The Revolt of 1857	122

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS UNIT

10 Popular Uprisings: Civil, Tribal and Peasant Movements

Why People Rose in Revolt · Civil Uprisings: Bengal and the East · Civil Uprisings: South and West · Religious-Political Movements · Tribal Revolts of Eastern India · Other Tribal Risings · Peasant Movements, 1783–1900 · Character and Significance

11 The Revolt of 1857

Earlier Mutinies and Unrest · Causes of the Revolt · The Spark and the Outbreak · Centres, Leaders, Commanders · Suppression and the Leaders' Fate · Who Stayed Loyal, and Why · Why the Revolt Failed · Nature of the Revolt: The Debate · Consequences: Rule by the Crown

MODERN INDIAN HISTORY

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The Revolt of 1857

On 10 May 1857 the sepoys at Meerut shot their officers, freed their jailed comrades and rode to Delhi, where they declared the aged Bahadur Shah II their Emperor. Within weeks the Bengal Army had risen across the Gangetic plain, and peasants, taluqdars and dispossessed princes joined them. The British took more than a year to crush the revolt, and in 1858 the Crown took India from the East India Company. Dates, places, leaders and their British opponents are the core facts here.

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS

History of India and Indian National Movement

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Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present - significant events, personalities, issues

CONTENTS

01	Earlier Mutinies and Unrest	02	Causes of the Revolt
03	The Spark and the Outbreak	04	Centres, Leaders, Commanders
05	Suppression and the Leaders' Fate	06	Who Stayed Loyal, and Why
07	Why the Revolt Failed	08	Nature of the Revolt: The Debate
09	Consequences: Rule by the Crown	10	Previous Year Questions

This chapter covers:

- earlier mutinies, and the political, economic, social and military causes of the revolt;
- the spark: the Enfield cartridge, Barrackpore, Meerut and Delhi;
- the storm centres, their leaders, and the British officers who retook them;
- why the revolt failed, and the debate on its nature;
- the results: the Queen's Proclamation, the Act of 1858 and the new army.

Earlier civil and tribal risings are in Chapter 10; the Act of 1858 is detailed in Chapter 5.

01 Earlier Mutinies and Unrest

The revolt was not a bolt from the blue. Sepoys had mutinied many times before 1857, usually over pay, allowances or rules that touched caste and religion.

- **Vellore (10 July 1806)**: sepoys rose against new dress rules (a new turban with a leather cockade, and a ban on caste marks and earrings). Tipu Sultan's sons were held in the fort, and the rebels raised Mysore's flag.
- **Barrackpore (1824)**: the 47th Native Infantry refused to sail to Burma, fearing loss of caste across the sea; artillery fired on the men and the unit was disbanded.
- In **1844** Bengal regiments refused to march to **Sindh** until the extra allowance (**batta**) was granted; further mutinies broke out in 1849–52, during Dalhousie's term.
- Civil risings such as the **Kol (1831–32)** and **Santhal (1855–56)** rebellions had already shaken British confidence (Chapter 10).
- Defeats and losses in the **First Afghan War (1839–42)**, and heavy fighting in the **Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845–49)** and the **Crimean War (1854–56)**, weakened the myth that the British could not be beaten.

02 Causes of the Revolt

From Grievance to Revolt: The Road to 1857

A century of grievances (1757–1857) needed only a spark; the greased cartridge supplied it.

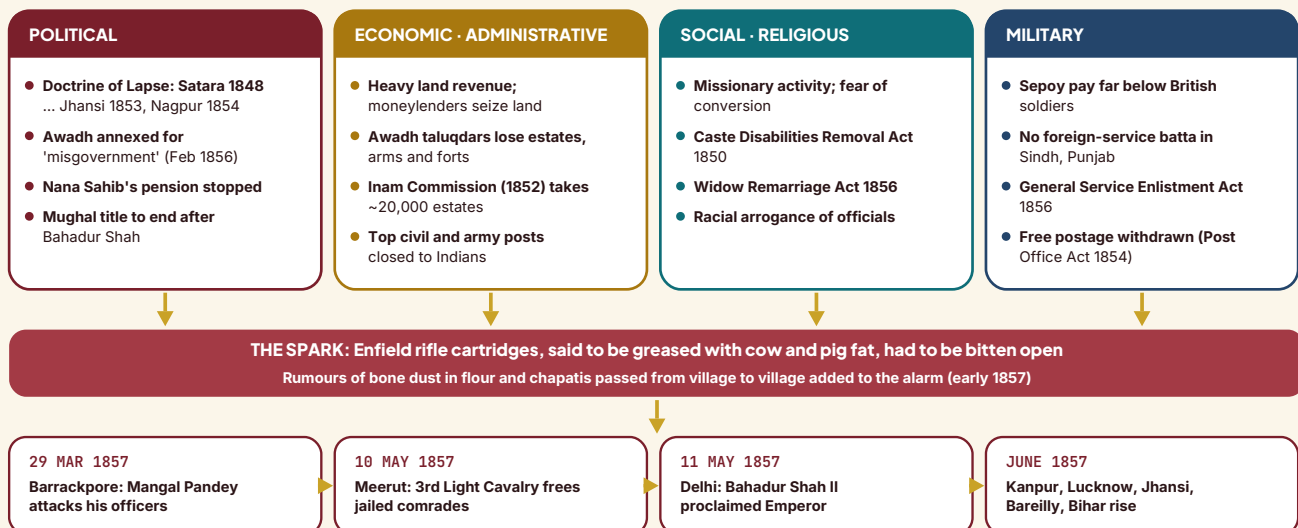


Fig. 11.1 Four streams of grievance, one spark, and the first weeks of the revolt.

Political Causes

- **Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse** took Satara (1848), Jaitpur and Sambalpur (1849), Baghat (1850), Udaipur (1852), **Jhansi (1853)** and **Nagpur (1854)** (Chapter 3).
- **Awadh** was annexed in **February 1856** on the charge of misgovernment, **not under the Doctrine of Lapse**; Nawab **Wajid Ali Shah** was sent to Calcutta.

- **Nana Sahib**, adopted son of the last Peshwa **Baji Rao II**, was refused his father's pension of about **₹8 lakh** a year after Baji Rao died in 1851.
- The regal titles of the Nawab of the **Carnatic** and the Raja of **Tanjore** were ended.
- After Prince Faqir-ud-din died in **1856**, **Canning** declared that the next Mughal heir would lose the imperial title and have to leave the Red Fort. Muslims saw this as the humbling of the House of Timur.
- Indians resented an "**absentee sovereignty**": unlike earlier rulers, the British sent revenue out of India.

Economic and Administrative Causes

- Revenue demand was heavy under every settlement, often about half of the produce; peasants fell into debt and lost land to moneylenders and traders.
- Artisans lost royal patronage and their markets to British machine goods.
- The **Inam Commission**, set up in Bombay in **1852**, examined titles to rent-free land and confiscated about **20,000** estates.
- The highest posts open to Indians were **subedar** in the army and **sadr amin** in the civil service; all higher posts went to Europeans.
- The fall of princely courts threw soldiers, officials, poets, musicians and craftsmen out of work.

CONCEPT: AWADH, THE STORM CENTRE

After annexation the British made a **Summary Settlement in 1856**. It assumed that the **taluqdars** (great landholders) were interlopers with no lasting right to the land, and tried to settle revenue **directly with the peasants**. The taluqdars lost many villages; they were also **disarmed, their armies disbanded and their forts destroyed**. Awadh also supplied a large share of the Bengal Army's sepoys, so the loss of their Nawab hit the soldiers directly. When the revolt came, sepoys, taluqdars and peasants of Awadh rose together.

Social and Religious Causes

- Officials treated Indians with open racial contempt; European juries let off Europeans charged with crimes against Indians.
- Christian missionaries worked under official protection after the **Charter Act of 1813**; many Indians believed the government wanted to convert them.
- Laws against **sati** (1829) and for **widow remarriage (1856)** were seen as meddling in religion.
- The **Caste Disabilities Removal Act, 1850** (often called the Religious Disabilities Act) let a convert to another religion inherit his father's property.
- Rumours spread that railways, the telegraph and schools were tools of conversion; rebels later called the telegraph wire "the accursed string".

Military Causes

- In **1856** the Company's army had about **2.38 lakh** Indian soldiers and only about **45,000** Europeans.

- Many Bengal Army sepoy were **high-caste Brahmins and Rajputs** from Awadh and the North-Western Provinces: "peasants in uniform" who shared the anger of their villages.
- An Indian sepoy earned about ₹7–9 a month, far less than a British soldier, and could rise no higher than subedar.
- The foreign-service allowance (**batta**) was denied for service in Sindh and Punjab once those areas became British.
- The **Post Office Act, 1854** ended the sepoys' free postage.
- Canning's **General Service Enlistment Act, 1856** made new Bengal Army recruits agree to serve anywhere, including overseas.

03

The Spark and the Outbreak

The **Enfield rifle** (Pattern 1853) began replacing the old "**Brown Bess**" musket in 1856–57, with training depots at **Dum Dum, Ambala and Sialkot**. Its paper cartridge had to be bitten open before loading. From January 1857 sepoys believed the grease was made of **cow and pig fat**, defiling both Hindus and Muslims. Denials did not help, and rumours of **bone dust in army flour** followed. In early 1857 **chapatis** were passed from village to village across north India; no one has explained their meaning.

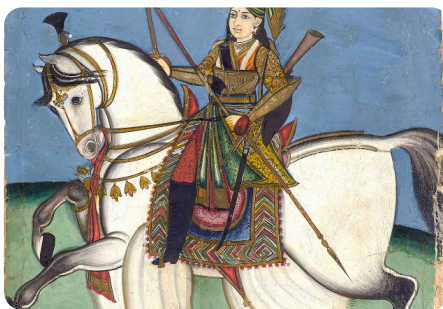
- **Berhampore (Bengal), February 1857**: the **19th Native Infantry** refused the cartridges and was disbanded in March.
- **Barrackpore, 29 March 1857**: Mangal Pandey of the **34th Native Infantry** called on his comrades to rise, and fired at and wounded the adjutant, **Lieutenant Baugh**, and **Sergeant-Major Hewson**. He was hanged on **8 April 1857**; Jemadar Ishwari Prasad, who refused to arrest him, was also hanged, and the regiment was disbanded in May.
- **Meerut, 9–10 May 1857**: **85** troopers of the **3rd Light Cavalry** who refused the cartridges were sentenced to ten years and publicly put in fetters on 9 May. On the evening of **10 May** (a Sunday) their comrades rose, broke open the jail, killed several officers and set off for Delhi.
- **Delhi, 11 May 1857**: the Meerut sepoys and the Delhi regiments seized the city. **Lieutenant Willoughby** blew up the magazine to keep it from them; **Simon Fraser**, the Commissioner, was killed.
- The sepoys proclaimed **Bahadur Shah II** (pen name **Zafar**) **Emperor of Hindustan**. This turned a mutiny into a political revolt, because the Mughal throne was still the symbol of India's unity.

DATE	PLACE	EVENT
Feb 1857	Berhampore	19th NI refuses cartridges; disbanded in March
29 Mar 1857	Barrackpore	Mangal Pandey's attack; hanged 8 April
10 May 1857	Meerut	3rd Light Cavalry and others rise; march to Delhi
11 May 1857	Delhi	City seized; Bahadur Shah II proclaimed Emperor

DATE	PLACE	EVENT
30 May 1857	Lucknow	Sepoys rise; Residency besieged after Chinhat (30 June)
4–5 Jun 1857	Kanpur	Sepoys rise; Nana Sahib proclaimed Peshwa
Jun 1857	Jhansi	Troops rise; Rani Lakshmibai takes charge
Jul 1857	Arrah (Bihar)	Danapur sepoys join Kunwar Singh

04

Centres, Leaders, Commanders



Rani Lakshmibai



Tantia Tope



Nana Sahib

Fig. 11.2 The Rani of Jhansi on horseback in a painting of about 1860; Tantia Tope; and Nana Sahib (Dhondu Pant) in a contemporary print.

Each centre had its own leader, who accepted Bahadur Shah as Emperor but fought largely on his own. Most leaders were princes or landholders who had lost their thrones, pensions or estates to the British.

CENTRE	REBEL LEADER(S)	BRITISH COMMANDER(S)	RETAKEN
Delhi	Bahadur Shah II; General Bakht Khan	John Nicholson, Archdale Wilson, Hodson	20 Sep 1857
Kanpur	Nana Sahib; Tantia Tope; Azimullah Khan	Havelock; Colin Campbell	Jul / 6 Dec 1857
Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal (son Birjis Qadr)	Havelock, Outram; Colin Campbell	Mar 1858
Jhansi	Rani Lakshmibai	Sir Hugh Rose	3 Apr 1858
Gwalior	Rani Lakshmibai, Tantia Tope	Sir Hugh Rose	Jun 1858
Bareilly	Khan Bahadur Khan	Colin Campbell	May 1858
Arrah, Jagdishpur	Kunwar Singh	Vincent Eyre; William Tayler	1857–58

CENTRE	REBEL LEADER(S)	BRITISH COMMANDER(S)	RETAKEN
Allahabad, Banaras	Maulvi Liaqat Ali	Colonel James Neill	Jun 1857
Faizabad	Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah	—	Killed Jun 1858

Delhi

- Bahadur Shah was only the symbol. Real command lay with a **Court of Administration** of ten members (six soldiers, four civilians) and with **Bakht Khan**, a former artillery subedar who brought the Bareilly troops to Delhi.
- Bahadur Shah's age (he was 82), weakness and court intrigues weakened the revolt at its centre.

Kanpur

- **Nana Sahib** (Dhondu Pant) proclaimed himself Peshwa and governor under the Emperor. **General Hugh Wheeler** surrendered on **27 June 1857**.
- Europeans leaving by boat were massacred at **Satichaura Ghat** (27 June), and women and children held at the **Bibighar** were killed on 15 July. British troops took terrible revenge.
- **Tantia Tope** (Ramchandra Pandurang Tope) did most of the fighting; **Azimullah Khan**, who had pleaded Nana's pension case in London, handled propaganda.

Lucknow

- **Begum Hazrat Mahal**, a wife of Wajid Ali Shah, led the revolt and made her minor son **Birjis Qadr** Nawab (formally installed 5 July 1857).
- After the rebel victory at **Chinhat (30 June)**, the British held out in the **Residency**; the Chief Commissioner **Sir Henry Lawrence** died of wounds on **4 July**.
- **Havelock and Outram** fought their way in (September) but were themselves besieged; **Sir Colin Campbell**, the new Commander-in-Chief, evacuated the Residency in **November 1857**, using Gorkha troops among others.

Jhansi, Bihar and Bareilly

- **Rani Lakshmibai**, widow of **Gangadhar Rao**, had been refused recognition of her adopted son **Damodar Rao** and pensioned off with **₹60,000** a year. Her cry was "**Mera Jhansi nahin dunga**" (I will not give up my Jhansi).
- **Kunwar Singh**, the ruined zamindar of **Jagdishpur** (Shahabad district) and nearly **80** years old, joined the Danapur sepoys and besieged Arrah; he was the leader the British feared most in Bihar.
- **Khan Bahadur Khan**, a grandson of the Rohilla chief Hafiz Rahmat Khan, took the title **Nawab Nazim** at Bareilly and raised about **40,000** men.
- **Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah** of Faizabad, a preacher originally from the Madras region, became a leading rebel in Awadh.

REGION	LEADER	NOTE
Assam	Maniram Dewan (Dutta Barua)	Backed the Ahom prince Kandarpeswar Singha; hanged 1858
Sambalpur (Odisha)	Surendra Sai	Fought long after 1857; earlier denied the throne
Kota (Rajasthan)	Jaidayal and Haradayal	Troops of Kota rose and killed the Political Agent
Auwa (Marwar)	Thakur Kushal Singh	Defeated the Jodhpur and British forces
Rewari (Haryana)	Rao Tula Ram	Fought the British at Narnaul
Mathura; Meerut area	Devi Singh; Kadam Singh; Shah Mal	Peasant leaders of western UP
Satara	Rango Bapuji Gupte	Had pleaded Satara's case in London

05

Suppression and the Leaders' Fate

1857–59 at a Glance: Risings and Recaptures

Top row: the revolt spreads (1857). Bottom row: the British recover each centre (1857–59). Delhi fell first; Tantia Tope held out longest.

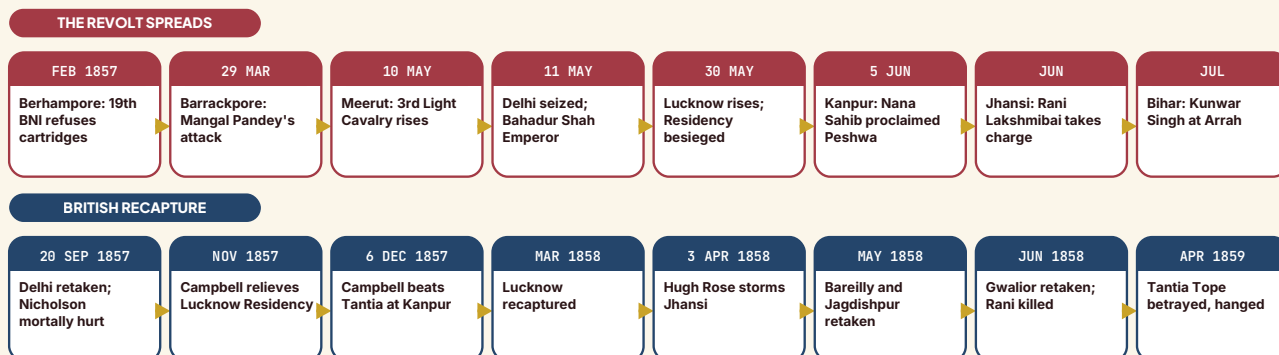


Fig. 11.3 How the revolt spread in 1857, and the order in which the British won back each centre.

- **Delhi:** troops from Punjab under **Archdale Wilson** stormed the city from 14 September and took it on **20 September 1857**. **John Nicholson**, who led the assault, died of his wounds.
- Bahadur Shah surrendered at **Humayun's Tomb** to **Lieutenant William Hodson**, who shot dead two of his sons and a grandson the next day.
- Bahadur Shah was tried in the Red Fort (1858) and exiled to **Rangoon**, where he died in **1862**.
- **Kanpur:** Havelock retook it in July 1857; **Campbell** defeated Tantia Tope there on **6 December 1857**. Nana Sahib escaped to **Nepal** (1859) and disappeared.
- **Lucknow** fell to Campbell in **March 1858**; Begum Hazrat Mahal escaped to **Nepal**, where she died (1879).
- **Jhansi:** **Sir Hugh Rose** stormed it on **3 April 1858**. The Rani escaped to Kalpi and, with Tantia Tope, seized **Gwalior** (June 1858) after Scindia fled to Agra.

- The Rani died fighting near Gwalior (Kotah-ki-Serai) in **June 1858**, dressed as a soldier. Hugh Rose called her the best and bravest of the rebel leaders.
- **Kunwar Singh** won a last victory near Jagdishpur and died of his wounds in **April 1858**.
- **Tantia Tope** fought a guerrilla war in central India, was betrayed by **Man Singh** of Narwar, captured in April 1859 and **hanged at Shivpuri** on **18 April 1859**.
- **Maulvi Ahmadullah** was killed in June 1858 by the Raja of Powayan, who sent his head to the British.
- By **July 1858** the main revolt was over; Canning declared peace on **8 July 1858**.

The British reprisals were brutal. **Colonel James Neill** hanged suspected rebels without trial around **Banaras and Allahabad**; villages were burned and mutineers were blown from guns. In Lucknow, the fortified garden of **Secundra Bagh** was stormed during Campbell's relief in November 1857, and about two thousand defenders died inside.

Canning tried to restrain indiscriminate punishment. British critics mocked him as "**Clemency Canning**".



Fig. 11.4 Secundra Bagh, Lucknow, showing the breach and gateway, photographed by Felice Beato in 1858.

06 Who Stayed Loyal, and Why

- The **Madras and Bombay armies** and the **Sikh, Gorkha and Pathan** soldiers of the Punjab stayed loyal; the Punjab was kept quiet by its Chief Commissioner, **John Lawrence**.
- The revolt hardly touched **India south of the Narmada**, eastern Bengal, Rajputana's big states or Sindh. The worst-hit areas were **western Bihar, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Delhi** and the land between the **Chambal and Narmada**.
- Loyal princes included **Scindia** of Gwalior (minister **Dinkar Rao**), the **Nizam** (minister **Salar Jung**), **Holkar**, the Begum of **Bhopal, Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kashmir** and **Rampur**.
- **Jung Bahadur** of Nepal sent Gorkha troops; **Dost Muhammad** of Afghanistan stayed friendly.
- Canning said of Scindia, "If Scindia joins the mutiny, I shall have to pack off tomorrow", and called the loyal princes "**breakwaters to the storm**".
- The **Sikh** chiefs feared a Mughal revival; the **Rajput** chiefs and the **Nizam** feared a Maratha revival under a new Peshwa.
- **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**, then sadr amin (a judicial officer) at **Bijnor**, stayed loyal and helped save European lives.
- **Bengal zamindars**, big merchants and moneylenders sided with the British; the Awadh taluqdars drifted away once promised their estates back.
- The **Western-educated middle class** stayed away. They saw the rebels as backward-looking, and the British Indian Association of Calcutta stood by the government.

Why the Revolt Failed

- **Limited spread:** only parts of north and central India rose; the south, Punjab and most of Bengal did not.
- **Divided Indians:** about half the sepoys did not rebel; Indian troops helped retake Delhi.
- **Weak central leadership:** Bahadur Shah was old and hesitant; leaders did not coordinate.
- **No common programme:** each leader fought for his own state, pension or estate; there was no plan for a new order.
- **Old weapons:** rebels relied on swords, spears and old muskets against Enfield rifles and artillery.
- **British resources:** troops came from Britain and from China, Persia and the Crimea; the telegraph carried news ahead of the rebels.
- **Able British officers:** the Lawrence brothers, Nicholson, Havelock, Outram, Campbell and Rose.
- **Feudal outlook:** rebels looked back to Mughal and Peshwa rule, so modern-minded Indians kept away.

REMEMBER: UNITY IN THE REVOLT

Hindus and Muslims fought side by side and accepted a Muslim Emperor. Rebel governments often **banned cow slaughter**, and the **Azamgarh Proclamation (August 1857)**, issued in the name of the Mughal prince Firoz Shah, appealed to zamindars, merchants, officials, artisans and religious leaders of both faiths. **The revolt was not a communal outbreak.** Contemporary Indian writing on it includes **Mirza Ghalib's** Delhi diary **Dastanbuy**, **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind** (The Causes of the Indian Revolt, 1859) and **Vishnubhat Godse's** Marathi travelogue **Majha Pravas**.

Nature of the Revolt: The Debate

Historians still argue whether 1857 was a sepoy mutiny, a feudal reaction or a national war. Most now agree it began as a mutiny but quickly became a popular rebellion in Awadh, western Bihar and Rohilkhand.

VIEW	WHO HELD IT
A "sepoy mutiny", without popular support	Sir John Seeley, Sir John Lawrence; also some Indian eyewitnesses and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan
"A national rising", not an affair of greased cartridges	Benjamin Disraeli (in Parliament, 1857)
"A war of fanatic religionists against Christians"	L.E.R. Rees
"A conflict between civilisation and barbarism"	T.R. Holmes
A Muslim conspiracy "making capital of Hindu grievances"	Sir James Outram, William Tayler

VIEW	WHO HELD IT
"The First War of Indian Independence", a planned national war	V.D. Savarkar, <i>The Indian War of Independence</i> (1909)
"Neither First, nor National, nor War of Independence"	R.C. Majumdar
Began "as a fight for religion" but "ended as a war of independence"	S.N. Sen, <i>Eighteen Fifty-Seven</i> (1957)
Essentially "a feudal outburst" aided by anti-foreign feeling	Jawaharlal Nehru
The First War of Independence: a combine of all classes	S.B. Chaudhuri
A soldier-peasant democratic struggle against foreign and feudal bondage	Marxist historians

- Savarkar's book was first published in **1909** and banned by the British **even before publication**.
- S.N. Sen's book was the government-sponsored history written for the **centenary in 1957**.
- Whatever its nature, the revolt became a symbol of resistance and inspired later nationalists.

09 Consequences: Rule by the Crown

After 1857: What Changed

The Company's rule ended; the Crown ruled India through a Secretary of State and a Viceroy.

GOVERNMENT	PRINCES · LANDLORDS	ARMY	POLICY TO INDIANS
• Gol Act, 2 Aug 1858: Company's rule ends • Secretary of State + 15-member Council of India • Governor-General also styled Viceroy (Canning first) • Proclamation read at Allahabad, 1 Nov 1858	• Annexation given up; Doctrine of Lapse dropped • Right to adopt heirs recognised • States accept Crown paramountcy • Awadh taluqdars get estates back	• More Europeans: ratio 1:2 (Bengal), 1:3 (Madras, Bombay) • Artillery kept in European hands • 'Martial races' — Punjabis, Gorkhas, Pathans • Mixed regiments: 'divide and counterpoise'	• Non-interference in religion promised • Caution in social reform • ICS Act and Indian Councils Act, 1861 • Racial distance widens; 'White Man's Burden'

Fig. 11.5 The main changes after 1857 in government, the princely states, the army and policy towards Indians.

The Act of 1858 and the Proclamation

- The **Government of India Act, 1858** (Act for the Better Government of India; passed **2 August 1858**) ended the Company's rule and transferred India to the Crown.
- It abolished the Board of Control and Court of Directors, and created a **Secretary of State for India** (a British cabinet minister) with a **15-member Council of India**. The first Secretary of State was **Lord Stanley**.

- The Governor-General, as the Crown's representative, also took the title **Viceroy**; **Lord Canning** was the first Viceroy.
- **Queen Victoria's Proclamation** was read by Canning at a **darbar at Allahabad on 1 November 1858**.

THE PROCLAMATION PROMISED	EFFECT
No further extension of territory	The policy of annexation ended
Respect for the rights, dignity and honour of native princes; treaties to be honoured	Princes became allies; right of adoption accepted
No interference in religious beliefs and worship	Government became cautious about social reform
Office open to all subjects "of whatever race or creed", if qualified	Led to the Indian Civil Services Act, 1861
Due regard to ancient rights, usages and customs	Support for landed and orthodox interests
Pardon for rebels, except those directly involved in murdering British subjects	General amnesty

- The Proclamation **did not regulate the Company's trade**: the Company's monopoly of Indian trade had ended in 1813 and all its trade in **1833** (Chapter 5).
- The change was more of form than of substance: the same officials, army and policies continued.

The Princes and the Landlords

- The **Doctrine of Lapse** was given up; Canning issued **sanads of adoption** to the princes, who in return accepted the **paramountcy** of the Crown.
- Loyal princes were rewarded: the Nizam's debts to the Company were cancelled and some of his assigned districts returned; Scindia, Patiala and others received land or titles. Nepal received a strip of Awadh's Terai.
- The **Order of the Star of India** was created in **1861** to honour loyal rulers.
- Most Awadh taluqdars got their estates back on promise of loyalty; they became pillars of British rule.
- Queen Victoria took the title **Empress of India (Kaiser-i-Hind)** under the Royal Titles Act, 1876, proclaimed at the Delhi Durbar of **1 January 1877**.

The New Army

- The **Peel Commission (1858–59)** advised more European troops. The ratio of Europeans to Indians was fixed at about **1:2 in the Bengal Army** and **1:3 in the Madras and Bombay armies**.
- European troops rose from about **45,000** to about **65,000**, and Indian troops fell from about 2.38 lakh to about 1.4 lakh.
- **Artillery** and key posts were reserved for Europeans; Indians were **kept out of the artillery** (a few mountain batteries apart).

- Recruitment shifted to "**martial races**" (Sikhs, Gorkhas, Pathans, Punjabi Muslims) and away from Awadh, Bihar and central India. Regiments mixed castes and regions so that no unit felt a common cause: the policy of "**division and counterpoise**".
- The Company's European regiments passed to the Crown (Army Amalgamation, 1861).

Wider Effects

- Sir **Bartle Frere** and others argued that the revolt came from a lack of contact between rulers and ruled; the **Indian Councils Act, 1861** brought a few nominated Indians into the legislative councils (Chapter 6).
- Racial distance grew. The British posed as a ruling race with a civilising mission, and the idea of the "**White Man's Burden**" justified rule.
- Muslims were treated with special suspicion after 1857; later the British used **divide and rule** between communities.
- The revolt ended the age of expansion and opened an age of economic exploitation under direct Crown rule.

COMMON CONFUSION: PRELIMS TRAPS IN THIS CHAPTER

- Mangal Pandey's attack was at **Barrackpore (29 March 1857)**; the revolt proper began at **Meerut (10 May 1857)**. He wounded his officers; he did not start the Meerut rising.
- Awadh was annexed in 1856 for **misgovernment**, not by the Doctrine of Lapse; its taluqdars were **disarmed** and their forts pulled down.
- Lucknow's leader was **Begum Hazrat Mahal**, not Wajid Ali Shah, who was in Calcutta. Bareilly's was **Khan Bahadur Khan**; Bihar's was **Kunwar Singh**.
- **Hugh Rose** retook Jhansi and Gwalior; **Colin Campbell** retook Lucknow, Kanpur and Bareilly; **Nicholson** fell at Delhi.
- The Queen's Proclamation was read at **Allahabad on 1 November 1858**; it ended annexation, but it **did not** deal with Company trade, which had ended in 1833.
- Savarkar called 1857 the **First War of Independence**; Majumdar said it was neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence.
- Canning was Governor-General during the revolt and then the **first Viceroy**; Bahadur Shah died in **Rangoon (1862)**.



Previous Year Questions



2026

Consider the following statements regarding the British policy in Awadh immediately after its annexation in 1856 :

1. The taluqdars were dispossessed of their estates but allowed to retain their arms and forts.
2. A Summary Revenue Settlement was made in 1856 assuming that the taluqdars were outsiders.
3. The British believed in taking revenue directly from the peasants by removing the taluqdars.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

a 2 and 3 only

b 1 and 3 only

c 1, 2 and 3

d 2 only

Answer: (a). The 1856 summary settlement treated the taluqdars as interlopers and dealt directly with the peasants; the taluqdars were also disarmed and their forts destroyed, so statement 1 is wrong (Section 02).

2014

What was/were the object/objects of Queen Victoria's Proclamation (1858)?

1. To disclaim any intention to annex Indian States
2. To place the Indian administration under the British Crown
3. To regulate East India Company's trade with India

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

a 1 and 2 only

b 2 only

c 1 and 3 only

d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). The Proclamation (1 November 1858) announced Crown rule and gave up annexation of Indian states; the Company's trade had already ended under the Charter Act of 1833 (Section 09).

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