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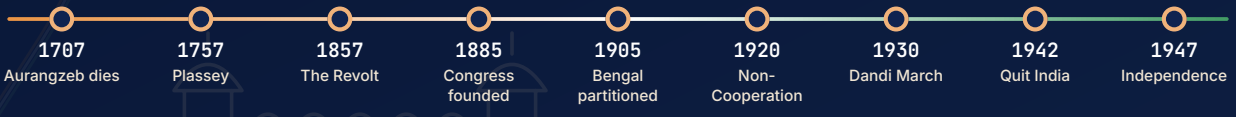
Modern Indian History

Complete notes from the decline of the Mughals to Independence and the integration of the states, told as a connected story, with original maps, Prelims Fact and Trap boxes, quick-revision panels and previous year questions.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

41 CHAPTERS	**9** UNITS	**404** FACT, TRAP AND CONNECTING BOXES
126 ORIGINAL MAPS AND DIAGRAMS	**329** PRELIMS PYQS 1995–2026	**42** MAINS PYQS 2013–2026

FROM THE MUGHAL DECLINE TO FREEDOM, 1707–1947



IN THIS BOOK

I The Eighteenth Century and the Coming of the Europeans
II Expansion and Consolidation of British Power
III The Colonial State, Economy and Society
IV Resistance and Reform (up to c. 1900)
V The Rise of Indian Nationalism (1858–1918)
VI The Gandhian Era I (1915–1929)
VII The Gandhian Era II (1930–1947)
VIII Other Strands and Makers of Modern India
IX Quick Revision

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Updated to November 2026

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Modern Indian History for UPSC

Notes for UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination and Mains General Studies Paper I

Prelims 2027 Edition · Compiled November 2026 · Compiled by Arvind KrS

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MODERN INDIAN HISTORY · PRELIMS · GS PAPER I

The Revolt of 1857

For a hundred years after Plassey, the East India Company swallowed India piece by piece, and almost every class acquired a grievance. In 1857 these separate angers met in the one body that touched them all: the Company's own **peasants in uniform**, its sepoy army. A rumour about greased cartridges turned a mutiny at **Meerut** on **10 May 1857** into the greatest challenge the British ever faced in India, as sepoys, peasants, deposed rulers and townspeople rose across the Gangetic plain and Central India. The British won back control within eighteen months, but the Company was abolished, the Crown took over, and India was ruled more cautiously and more coldly ever after.

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; the Freedom Struggle: its various stages and important contributors and contributions from different parts of the country

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01 A Century of Grievance: Why 1857?
02 Political Causes: Annexation and Humiliation
03 Economic and Administrative Causes
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05 The Sepoy's Grievances
06 The Spark: Cartridges, Barrackpore and Meerut
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12 After 1857: The Raj Remade
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01 A Century of Grievance: Why 1857?

The Revolt did not come out of nowhere. Between 1757 and 1857 the Company's rule provoked a long series of sporadic outbursts: tribal revolts, peasant uprisings, rebellions by deposed rajas and chiefs, and movements with a religious colour (Chapter 17). They were local, poorly linked and easily suppressed. In 1857, a hundred years after Plassey, the anger was the same but the scale was new, because this time the rising began inside the army that held British India together.



Fig. 18.1 How the Revolt grew: a century of grievances, a military spark, a mutiny that became a civil rebellion, suppression, and a new form of British rule.

A Mutiny or Something Deeper?

- British writers of the time stressed military grievances, and above all the **greased cartridges**, as the cause of the rising. Modern Indian historians have shown that the cartridge was neither the only cause nor even the most important one.

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- The causes lay in the whole century of Company rule from Plassey (June 1757) to Mangal Pandey's outbreak at Barrackpore (29 March 1857): the cartridge was only the match that lit a heap of economic, political, administrative, socio-religious and military grievances.
- The impact of British rule had touched every class: rulers of Indian states, sepoys, zamindars and taluqdars, peasants, traders, artisans, pundits and maulvis. The one important exception was the new English-educated middle class, which owed its very existence to British rule.
- That is why historians describe 1857 as the **culmination** of a century of popular resistance, and as the product of the character and policies of colonial rule, rather than as a mere result of sepoy discontent.

02 Political Causes: Annexation and Humiliation

The Company's appetite for territory was the grievance that the princes and nobility felt first. Wellesley's **Subsidiary Alliance** had already reduced many rulers to dependants who paid for British troops and could not keep armies or conduct their own foreign policy. Under **Lord Dalhousie** (Governor-General, 1848–56) the policy of "effective control" turned into open annexation. To many Indians it seemed only a matter of time before every state was absorbed.

How Did Dalhousie Annex So Many States?

- Under the **Doctrine of Lapse**, a dependent state whose ruler died without a natural male heir "lapsed" to the Company: an adopted son could inherit the ruler's private property but not the throne. Hindu law and Indian custom had always allowed adoption, so the rule was seen as a plain device for grabbing land, a "lapse of morals" rather than a lapse of heirs.
- States taken by this doctrine included **Satara** (1848), **Jaitpur** and **Sambalpur** (1849), **Baghat** (1850), **Udaipur** in Chhattisgarh (1852), **Jhansi** (1853) and **Nagpur** (1854).
- Dalhousie "went too far and too fast". Much of the responsibility for the rising therefore rests on his policies, which created distrust in every court that still survived.

STATE ANNEXED	YEAR	HOW	LINK TO 1857
Satara	1848	Doctrine of Lapse	Rango Bapuji Gupte, sent to London to plead for Satara, later plotted revolt in Maharashtra
Jaitpur, Sambalpur	1849	Doctrine of Lapse	Surendra Sai of Sambalpur led a long revolt in western Odisha
Baghat	1850	Doctrine of Lapse	Later reversed by Canning
Udaipur (Chhattisgarh)	1852	Doctrine of Lapse	Later restored
Jhansi	1853	Doctrine of Lapse	Rani Lakshmibai became the revolt's most famous leader
Nagpur	1854	Doctrine of Lapse	Bhonsle family property auctioned; wide resentment
Awadh	1856	Alleged misgovernment (not lapse)	Became the heart of the civil rebellion

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Why Did Jhansi Rise?

Jhansi was a Maratha-ruled state in Bundelkhand. When its Raja, **Gangadhar Rao**, died in November 1853, a day after adopting a boy he named **Damodar Rao**, Dalhousie refused to recognise the adoption and annexed the state. In March 1854 the Rani was given a pension of ₹60,000 a year and told to leave the fort. She appealed in vain; three years later the troops at Jhansi rebelled and made her their ruler.

Why Was Awadh the Bitterest Wound?

Awadh was annexed in **February** 1856, not by lapse but on the ground of misgovernment. Nawab **Wajid Ali Shah** was deposed and sent to Calcutta, and Dalhousie claimed he was freeing the people from the Nawab's misrule and the taluqdars' oppression. Five years earlier he had described Awadh as "a cherry that will drop into our mouth one day". The annexation came after a long drain of Awadh's resources since 1765, and it hurt almost everyone.

- The Nawab was popular, not hated as the British believed; crowds followed him towards Kanpur singing laments. The dissolution of his court threw courtiers, soldiers, musicians, poets, cooks and artisans out of work.
- The **taluqdars**, who had held forts and armed retainers for generations, were disarmed and their forts destroyed (see Section 03).
- Most sepoys of the Bengal Army came from Awadh. When their own king was dethroned, they realised that the Company had used their services to liquidate their own ruler.
- So deep was the anger that, by one estimate, nearly three-fourths of the adult male population of Awadh took part in the Revolt.

Princes and Titles Humiliated

- **Nana Sahib**, adopted son of the last Peshwa **Baji Rao II**, was refused the pension of ₹8 lakh a year paid to Baji Rao, who died in 1851. Barred from the family seat at Poona, he lived at **Bithur** near Kanpur, where he would raise the banner of revolt.
- Dalhousie had recognised Prince **Faqir-ud-din** as the Mughal heir only on condition that the family leave the Red Fort. When Faqir-ud-din died in 1856, **Lord Canning** announced that the next heir would have to give up the imperial title and the ancestral palaces altogether. Many saw this as a deliberate humbling of the House of Timur.
- The titles and pensions of the **Nawab of the Carnatic** and the **Raja of Tanjore** were also abolished.

Rule from a Distance

Earlier conquerors, such as the Afghans and the Mughals, had settled in India and spent what they collected within the country. The British came to make money and go home: they remained **"perpetual foreigners"**. Their rule was an **absentee sovereignty**, directed from London, thousands of miles away, and draining India's wealth to Britain.

◆ PRELIMS TRAP LAPSE, MISGOVERNMENT AND CONQUEST

- **Awadh** (1856) was **not** annexed under the Doctrine of Lapse; the stated ground was misgovernment, or "the good of the governed".

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- **Punjab** (1849) and **Lower Burma (Pegu)** (1852) were annexed by conquest, not by lapse.
- The Doctrine of Lapse was **abandoned** after 1857: the Queen's Proclamation promised no further annexation, and from 1860 sanads of adoption allowed rulers to adopt heirs.

03 Economic and Administrative Causes

If annexation angered the princes, the Company's economic policy angered the countryside. The Industrial Revolution made Britain look for raw materials and markets, and Indian economic life was reshaped to serve that need. The old self-sufficient village economy broke down; cash crops were pushed in place of food crops; and the two great sources of livelihood, agriculture and handicrafts, were both damaged at once.

What Did the New Revenue Systems Do to the Land?

- Three land revenue systems covered most of British India: the **Permanent Settlement** introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha; the **Ryotwari** system begun by Alexander Read and Thomas Munro in the Baramahal and extended to Madras (1820) and, in the 1820s, to Bombay; and the **Mahalwari** system of the North-Western Provinces, Punjab and parts of Central India (Chapter 12).
- Under all three the demand was heavy, often half the produce or more, and it was collected rigidly even when the crop failed. Peasants borrowed from moneylenders at crushing interest, lost their land on default, and in 1857 many of them drove away officials and burnt the moneylenders' records.
- Zamindars too lost land for arrears, and their private armies were disbanded. The Company encouraged commercial crops such as indigo, cotton and opium in place of food crops, but nothing was invested to raise productivity, and twelve major famines and several minor ones struck between 1770 and 1857.
- Flogging and jailing for arrears were common, and the complicated new law courts favoured the rich over the poor.

Awadh's Taluqdars: How Did a Revenue Settlement Make Rebels?

The clearest case was Awadh. Immediately after annexation the taluqdars were disarmed and their forts destroyed, and the first revenue settlement, the **Summary Settlement of 1856**, treated them as interlopers with no permanent rights in land, removing them wherever possible. The British hoped to deal directly with the cultivators, cut out exploitation and raise revenue. In fact the state's revenue rose while the peasants' burden did not fall.

- Before annexation the taluqdars had held about 67 per cent of Awadh's villages; after the Summary Settlement they held about 38 per cent. Some in southern Awadh lost more than half their villages.
- Large areas were over-assessed, with demand raised by 30 to 70 per cent in places. The commissioner **Coverley Jackson** pressed hard enquiries into the titles of taluqdars.
- So taluqdar and peasant, whose relationship had mixed oppression with patronage, were both left worse off, and in 1857 they rose together, often with the taluqdar leading his former tenants.
- In Bombay, the **Inam Commission** (1852) enquired into the titles of holders of rent-free land grants and confiscated some 20,000 estates, alienating the landed gentry there too.

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Why Did Traders and Artisans Suffer?

- The Company's servants traded duty-free while Indian merchants paid full duties, so Indian goods could not compete. Discriminatory tariffs kept British manufactures cheap in India and Indian goods dear in Britain.
- Annexation removed the courts that had patronised craftsmen, and machine-made imports undercut the rest. Ruined artisans crowded on to the land, increasing pressure on agriculture and impoverishing the country as a whole.
- A continuous **drain of wealth** to Britain (Chapter 13) took away resources even as the population grew.

Was There a Place for Indians in the Administration?

- The Company's administration was "inefficient and insufficient", and it closed the doors of power to Indians. The highest post open to an Indian in the army was that of **subedar**, on ₹60–70 a month, and in the civil service that of **sadr amin**, on about ₹500 a month. Promotion was rare.
- Under Indian rulers, Indians had served at every level; under the Company the Indian aristocracy lost power and position, and poets, musicians and scholars lost their patrons.
- Corruption was rampant in the police, the lower courts and the petty bureaucracy, and the complex judicial process helped the rich exploit the poor.

04 Social and Religious Causes

Political and economic exploitation could be endured; the fear that their faith and way of life were under attack turned many Indians from resentment to revolt. In the 1850s that fear spread fast, because it seemed to be confirmed from many directions at once.

Why Did Indians Fear for Their Religion?

- **Racial arrogance:** officials treated Indians with open contempt, often calling them barbarians, and Europeans who assaulted Indians were usually acquitted or lightly punished by European judges.
- **Missionaries:** the **Charter Act of 1813** allowed missionaries into India under licence, and some officials made no secret of their hopes. A chairman of the Company's Court of Directors, **R. D. Mangles**, told the House of Commons that Providence had given India to England so that "the banner of Christ" might wave from one end of it to the other. Missionary schools, colleges and hospitals were read as instruments of conversion.
- **Social legislation:** the abolition of **sati** (Regulation XVII of 1829, under Lord William Bentinck, with Raja Rammohan Roy's support), laws against **female infanticide** and **slavery**, the **Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856** (prepared under Dalhousie and passed in July 1856) and the spread of girls' education were seen by many as interference in religion and custom (Chapter 21).
- The **Caste Disabilities Removal Act, 1850**, also called the **Lex Loci Act**, laid down that a change of religion would not deprive a person of his right to inherit ancestral property, so a Christian convert could inherit from his "heathen" father.
- **Taxing holy lands:** lands belonging to temples, mosques and charities, which earlier rulers had kept free of revenue, were now taxed.

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- **New technology:** railways, the telegraph and Western schools were suspected as tools of conversion. Rebels later called the telegraph "the accursed string" and the new education offices "shaitani daftar" (offices of the devil).

In this charged atmosphere, any new rumour about pollution or conversion would be believed. The greased cartridge supplied exactly such a rumour, and it convinced Hindu and Muslim soldiers alike that the British meant to destroy their religion.

05 The Sepoy's Grievances

The Bengal Army was the Company's largest force, and it was recruited largely from the peasant families of Awadh and the high-caste Brahmin and Rajput families of the North-Western Provinces. Service often passed from father to son. The sepoy was therefore a **peasant in uniform**: he carried the grievances of his village and his caste into the barracks, and when Awadh was annexed and the revenue screw tightened at home, his own family felt it.

What Were Their Professional Grievances?

- An Indian sepoy was paid about ₹7–9 a month, a fraction of a European soldier's pay, and faced racial discrimination in promotion and pensions. No Indian could rise above subedar.
- Sepoys were sent to distant regions without the foreign-service allowance (**bhatta**); after Sind and Punjab were annexed, service there no longer counted as foreign, so the bhatta was withdrawn.
- Indian rulers had rewarded bravery with jagirs; the Company did not. From the 1820s and 1830s it pushed a uniform army culture and cut many old privileges.
- The **Post Office Act of 1854** under Dalhousie withdrew the sepoys' free postage, so they now paid half an anna for a letter home.

Why Did Army Rules Clash with Caste?

- Military authorities forbade caste and sectarian marks, and regulated beards and turbans; high-caste sepoys also resented being treated on a par with low-caste recruits.
- Crossing the sea was believed to mean loss of caste, which made service in **Burma** or overseas a dreaded order. Lord Canning's **General Service Enlistment Act, 1856** required all new recruits to the Bengal Army to undertake to serve anywhere the government sent them, overseas included. Sepoys who had returned from the Afghan campaign of 1839–42 had already found themselves outcast by their communities.
- Shortly before 1857, rumours spread that bone dust had been mixed into the army's flour.

Had the Sepoys Rebelled Before?

Yes, many times, which is why 1857 was a culmination rather than a surprise. The Bengal Army had mutinied as early as 1764; at **Vellore** in 1806 sepoys rose when a new turban with a leather cockade was imposed (Chapter 17); at **Barrackpore** in 1824 a regiment that refused to go to Burma was fired on and disbanded; in 1844 Bengal regiments refused to march to Sind without bhatta; and further mutinies followed in 1849, 1850 and 1852.

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Was British Power Still Invincible?

Recent events suggested it was not. The British had suffered disaster in the **First Afghan War** (1838–42), hard fighting in the **Anglo-Sikh Wars** (1845–49) and heavy losses in the **Crimean War** (1854–56), and the **Santhal rebellion** (1855–56) had for a time swept away their authority in the Rajmahal hills. These events lowered British morale and raised the sepoys' confidence that a blow struck now could succeed.

CAUSE	KEY FACTS	WHO WAS HIT HARDEST
Political	Subsidiary Alliance; Doctrine of Lapse (1848–54); Awadh annexed (1856); Nana Sahib's pension refused; Mughal title threatened (1856)	Princes, nobles, sepoys from Awadh
Economic	Heavy revenue; Summary Settlement (1856); Inam Commission (1852); ruin of crafts; drain	Peasants, taluqdars, artisans, traders
Administrative	High posts barred to Indians (subedar, sadr amin); corruption; costly courts; absentee rule	Aristocracy, educated gentry
Socio-religious	Racism; missionaries; sati abolition (1829); Lex Loci (1850); Widow Remarriage Act (1856); taxing temple and mosque lands	Orthodox Hindus and Muslims, priests, maulvis
Military	Low pay; no bhatta; Post Office Act (1854); General Service Enlistment Act (1856); caste marks banned	Sepoys of the Bengal Army
Immediate	Greased cartridges of the Enfield rifle (1857)	Hindu and Muslim sepoys alike

06 The Spark: Cartridges, Barrackpore and Meerut

In 1857 the army began replacing the old smooth-bore musket, the **Brown Bess**, with the new **Enfield rifle** (Pattern 1853). It was a better weapon, but loading it began with a paper cartridge that had to be torn open, and the paper was greased to help the bullet slide into the barrel. A rumour ran through the Bengal Army that the grease was made from the fat of cows and pigs, a taboo for Hindus and Muslims alike.

How Was the Enfield Loaded, and Why Did It Matter?

- The soldier tore open the end of the greased cartridge with his **teeth**, poured the powder down the muzzle, rammed the bullet (still wrapped in the cartridge paper) home with the ramrod, fitted a percussion cap, aimed and fired.
- Biting the cartridge would, the sepoys believed, break caste for Hindus and defile Muslims. The authorities' denials and their later permission to tear cartridges by hand came too late: trust had already collapsed.
- The greased cartridge created no new grievance; it supplied the occasion for the accumulated discontent of a century to come into the open.

The First Rumblings

- **Berhampore** (Bengal, now in Murshidabad district), **26 February** 1857: the 19th Bengal Native Infantry refused to use the new cartridges; it was disbanded at the end of March.

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- **Barrackpore** (near Calcutta), **29 March** 1857: **Mangal Pandey**, a young sepoy of the **34th Bengal Native Infantry**, called on his comrades to rise, fired at and attacked his adjutant, Lieutenant Baugh, and Sergeant-Major Hewson, and wounded them both. He was overpowered, court-martialled and hanged on **8 April** 1857; the jemadar of the guard, **Ishwari Prasad**, who had not stopped him, was also hanged, and the regiment was disbanded.
- **Lucknow**, early May: the 7th Awadh Irregular Infantry refused the cartridges and was disarmed.

Meerut, 10 May 1857: The Mutiny Begins

At **Meerut**, about 60 km from Delhi, 90 men of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry refused the cartridges on **24 April** 1857. Eighty-five of these troopers were court-martialled, sentenced to up to ten years' imprisonment and, on 9 May, put in fetters before the whole garrison. The next evening, **10 May** 1857, the sepoys at Meerut broke into open revolt. They freed their imprisoned comrades, killed several of their officers and Europeans, and set off for Delhi that night.

Planned or Spontaneous?

- Before the outbreak, **chapatis** were passed from village to village across northern India, and **red lotuses** were said to circulate among regiments; roaming sanyasis, fakirs and maulvis preached against British rule. No one knows exactly what the chapatis meant, but they spread unease.
- Some historians see signs of an organised plan that never matured. Yet the commissions appointed after the revolt found no evidence of a central plot, and the journeys of **Azimullah Khan** (Nana Sahib's agent) and **Rango Bapuji Gupte** (Satara's agent) to London were missions to plead their masters' cases, not proof of a conspiracy.
- The best reading is that there was widespread disaffection, some local planning and much rumour, but no single, coordinated scheme.

◆ PRELIMS FACT THE FIRST DAYS, IN ORDER

- **26 February** 1857, Berhampore: 19th Bengal Native Infantry refuses the cartridges (disbanded in March).
- **29 March** 1857, Barrackpore: Mangal Pandey of the 34th BNI attacks his officers; hanged on 8 April 1857.
- **10 May** 1857, Meerut: the 3rd Light Cavalry and other units rise; the formal beginning of the Revolt.
- **11 May** 1857, Delhi: the Meerut sepoys reach Delhi; the city is in rebel hands by 12 May.
- The Governor-General throughout the Revolt was **Lord Canning** (1856–62), who became the first Viceroy in 1858.

07 Delhi and the Mughal Banner

The Meerut sepoys rode through the night and reached Delhi on the morning of **11 May**. Their first instinct was not to scatter home but to go to the Mughal capital, and that single choice turned a mutiny into a political rebellion. In Delhi the local regiments joined them, killed their own European officers and the Commissioner, **Simon Fraser**, and took the city. **Lieutenant Willoughby**, in charge of the great arsenal, blew up the magazine rather than let it fall intact.

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Why Bahadur Shah?

- The sepoys proclaimed the aged **Bahadur Shah II (Zafar)**, the last Mughal and a pensioner of the Company, Emperor of India. He was old, hesitant and powerless, but his name carried a legitimacy no other could give.
- Raising the Mughal to leadership acknowledged that the long reign of the dynasty had made it the traditional symbol of India's political unity. Every rebel leader who joined later hastened to declare loyalty to him.
- The first impulse of the Hindu sepoys at Meerut was to march to a Muslim emperor: proof that the rebels saw the British, not one another, as the enemy.
- After some hesitation, Bahadur Shah wrote to Indian rulers and chiefs urging them to form a confederacy to replace the British.
- The loss of Delhi was a serious blow to British prestige.

Who Actually Ruled Rebel Delhi?

- Real command lay with a **Court of Administration** of ten members, six from the army and four from the civil side, which governed in the emperor's name.
- From July its leading figure was **General Bakht Khan**, a former subedar of artillery who had led the Bareilly troops to Delhi; the emperor gave him real authority and the title **Sahib-i-Alam Bahadur**.
- Bahadur Shah's weak personality, old age and lack of leadership left a political weakness at the very nerve centre of the Revolt.

How Did a Mutiny Become a Popular Rebellion?

Within a month the whole Bengal Army was in revolt, and almost everywhere the civil population followed the sepoys. Between Delhi and Calcutta, wherever Indian troops were stationed, they rose; Awadh, Rohilkhand, the Doab, Bundelkhand, Central India, large parts of Bihar and eastern Punjab shook off British authority, and there were local risings as far as Hyderabad and Bengal.

- It was the wide participation of peasants, artisans, shopkeepers, day labourers, zamindars, religious men and petty officials that gave the Revolt its real strength and the character of a popular revolt, above all in the areas now in Uttar Pradesh.
- Rebels burnt barracks and bungalows, freed prisoners, looted treasuries and cut telegraph wires. In the towns they attacked courts, revenue offices (tehsils) and police stations; in the countryside they turned on moneylenders and new landlords and burnt account books and land records, destroying every symbol of British power.
- Where people did not fight, they fed and sheltered the rebels and misled British columns with false information.
- The cost was borne by ordinary people: by one estimate, of about 1,50,000 people who died fighting the British in Awadh, more than 1,00,000 were civilians.

Was 1857 a Hindu–Muslim Rising?

It was, strikingly so. Hindus and Muslims fought side by side, under a Muslim emperor, at every level from soldiers to leaders. Cow slaughter was banned in many rebel areas out of respect for Hindu feeling. A British

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official, **Charles Aitchison**, complained that "in this instance we could not play off the Mohammedans against the Hindus". Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a century later, saw two facts standing out in the tangled story of 1857: the remarkable unity of Hindus and Muslims, and the people's deep loyalty to the Mughal Crown. Nana Sahib's chief adviser was a Muslim, Azimullah Khan, and Rani Lakshmibai had the loyal support of Afghan soldiers. The events of 1857 show that Indian people and politics were not fundamentally communal before 1858, which is exactly why the British later worked so hard at dividing them (Chapter 35).

08 Storm Centres and Their Leaders

Once Delhi fell, other centres threw up their own leaders. In the absence of leaders from their own ranks, the rebels turned to the traditional elite: princes, nawabs and landed aristocrats who had suffered at British hands. These leaders acknowledged Bahadur Shah as emperor but acted independently, each fighting for a particular kingdom, title or claim. That mix of shared symbol and separate aims shaped both the strength and the weakness of the Revolt.

Kanpur: Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope

The Revolt of 1857: where it raged

Storm centres, the first sparks and other risings; the shaded zone saw the widest rebellion. Modern boundaries for reference only.

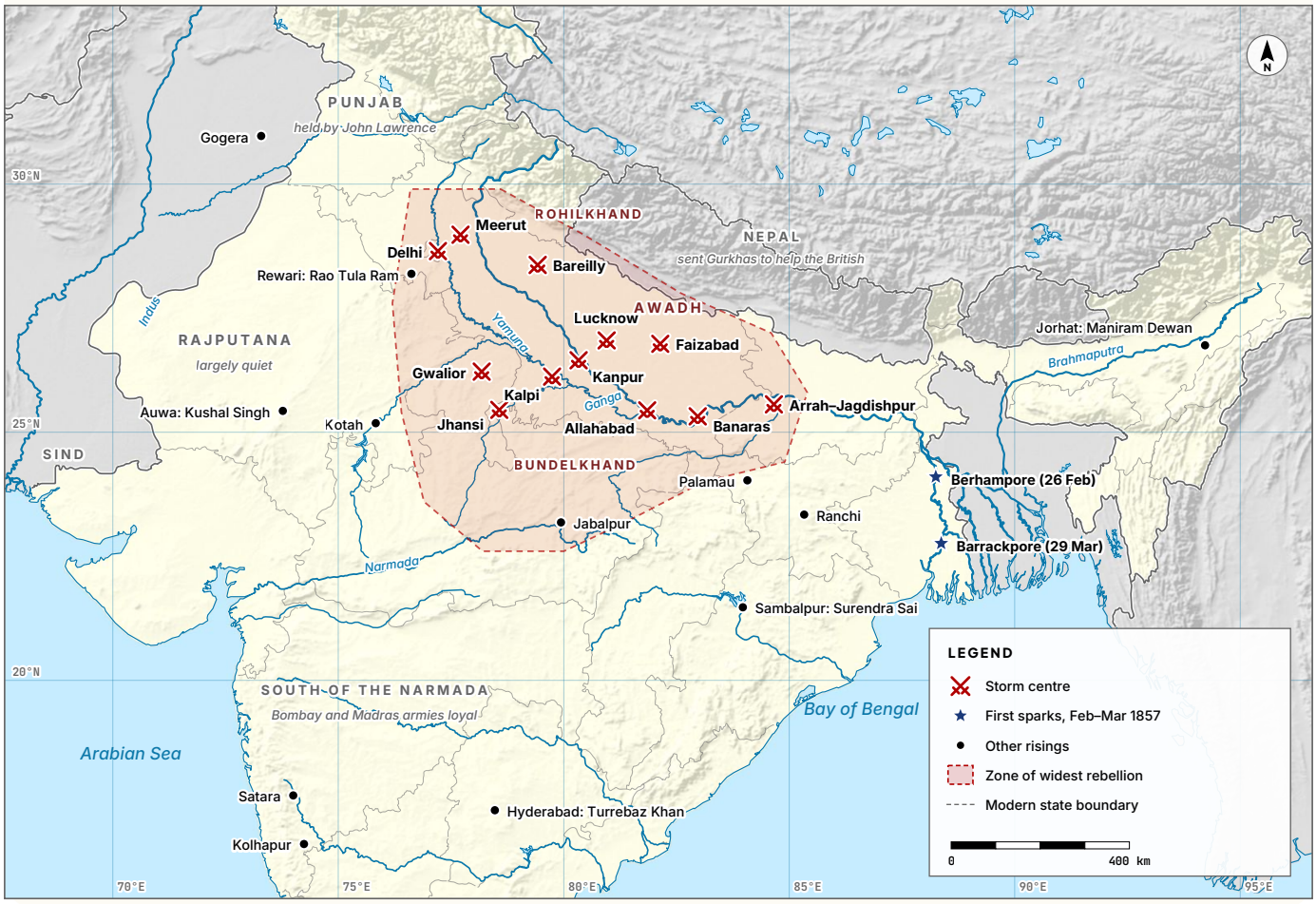


Fig. 18.2 Main centres of the Revolt, the zone of widest rebellion, and the regions that stayed largely quiet.

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- The sepoys at Kanpur rose on **5 June** 1857 and made **Nana Sahib** their leader. He expelled the English, proclaimed himself **Peshwa**, acknowledged Bahadur Shah as Emperor of India and declared himself his governor.
- Sir **Hugh Wheeler**, commanding the garrison, surrendered on terms in late June (26–27 June 1857); the evacuees were massacred at **Satichaura Ghat** as they boarded boats, and the women and children taken prisoner were later killed at the **Bibighar** (15 July). These killings became the British pretext for savage revenge.
- The fighting was largely in the hands of **Tatya Tope** (Ramchandra Panduranga Tope), Nana Sahib's loyal and able commander and a master of guerrilla warfare.
- **Azimullah Khan**, Nana's adviser, was an expert in political propaganda.

Lucknow: Begum Hazrat Mahal

- Lucknow rose at the end of May (most textbooks date the rising to 4 June 1857), and the British were driven into the fortified **Residency** after their defeat at **Chinhat** on 30 June.
- **Begum Hazrat Mahal**, a wife of the deposed Nawab, took the lead and proclaimed her young son **Birjis Qadr** Nawab of Awadh; a regular administration was set up, with important offices shared between Hindus and Muslims.
- Sepoys, taluqdars and peasants of Awadh rallied to her. The British Resident, **Sir Henry Lawrence**, was killed during the siege (4 July), and command passed to Brigadier Inglis.
- Among the Begum's fighters was **Uda Devi**, a Pasi woman who is remembered for her last stand at **Sikandar Bagh** on 16 November 1857.

Jhansi: Rani Lakshmibai



JHANSI

Rani Lakshmibai

- Born **Manikarnika** in Varanasi on 19 November (1828 in most accounts; some give 1835), she married Raja Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi and took the name Lakshmibai.
- When the troops at Jhansi rebelled in June 1857, she assumed control of the state. Though hesitant at first, she fought with great courage once committed, and she is regarded as the most outstanding leader of the Revolt and, for later nationalists, its supreme symbol.
- When Sir Hugh Rose besieged Jhansi (March 1858), her cry was that she would never give up her Jhansi ("Main apni Jhansi nahin doongi").

Fig. 18.3 Rani Lakshmibai on horseback, a painting from Central India made soon after the Revolt.

Bihar: Kunwar Singh

- **Kunwar Singh**, the ruined zamindar of **Jagdishpur** near **Arrah**, nearly 80 years old, joined the sepoys of Danapur (Dinapore) when they reached Arrah on **25 July 1857**, and became perhaps the most outstanding military leader of the Revolt, the one the British dreaded most.

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- He had been deprived of his estates by the British. Arrah, Danapur, Gaya, Patna, Muzaffarpur and Shahabad were major centres of the rising in Bihar.

Bareilly, Faizabad, Allahabad and Banaras

- **Bareilly: Khan Bahadur Khan**, a descendant of the former Rohilla ruler of Rohilkhand, dissatisfied with his British pension, proclaimed himself **Nawab Nazim**, raised an army of about 40,000 and offered stiff resistance.
- **Faizabad: Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah**, originally from Madras, preached revolt across Awadh, moving in a palanquin with drummers ahead, which earned him the name **Danka Shah**. Elected leader by the mutinous 22nd Native Infantry, he fought at Chinhat and became one of the acknowledged leaders of the Revolt.
- **Allahabad: Maulvi Liaqat Ali**, a religious leader, led the rebels of the Allahabad region.
- **Banaras and Allahabad:** risings were crushed with extreme brutality by **Colonel James Neill**, who hanged suspected rebels and even villagers indiscriminately.
- **Baraut (Baghpat): Shah Mal**, a Jat cultivator, mobilised the headmen of 84 villages (the *chaurasi des*), cut communications between Meerut and the British headquarters, sent supplies to Delhi and ran a "hall of justice" from a captured bungalow, until he was killed in July 1857.

CENTRE	RISING	REBEL LEADER(S)	SUPPRESSED BY
Delhi	11–12 May 1857	Bahadur Shah II; Bakht Khan	John Nicholson, Archdale Wilson; William Hodson (captured the emperor)
Kanpur	5 June 1857	Nana Sahib; Tatya Tope; Azimullah Khan	Henry Havelock (July 1857); Colin Campbell (6 December 1857)
Lucknow	End of May–June 1857	Begum Hazrat Mahal; Birjis Qadr; Ahmadullah Shah	Havelock and Outram (relief, September 1857); Colin Campbell (March 1858)
Jhansi	June 1857	Rani Lakshmibai	Sir Hugh Rose (April 1858)
Arrah / Jagdishpur	25 July 1857	Kunwar Singh	Vincent Eyre (Arrah, August 1857); William Taylor, Commissioner of Patna
Bareilly	31 May 1857	Khan Bahadur Khan	Colin Campbell (May 1858)
Faizabad	June 1857	Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah	Killed in June 1858
Allahabad, Banaras	June 1857	Maulvi Liaqat Ali (Allahabad)	Colonel James Neill

Beyond the Storm Centres

The Revolt is often pictured as a north Indian event, and its core certainly lay in the Gangetic plain and Central India. But it echoed far beyond, wherever annexation, revenue pressure or dispossession had prepared the ground. Most of these risings were small and quickly put down, but they show how widely the anger ran.

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REGION	LEADER(S)	WHAT HAPPENED
Assam	Maniram Dewan, Piyali Barua	Planned to restore Kandarpeswar Singha, grandson of the last Ahom king; Maniram was hanged at Jorhat in February 1858
Western Odisha	Surendra Sai	Denied the throne of Sambalpur, which was annexed in 1849; kept up resistance until 1862
Chotanagpur	Nilambar and Pitambar (Palamau); Thakur Vishwanath Shahdeo and Pandey Ganpat Rai (Ranchi); Gonoo (Singhbhum)	Tribal and landholder risings; the Ranchi leaders were hanged in 1858; Gonoo led the Kol tribals of Singhbhum
Haryana	Rao Tula Ram of Rewari	Seized Rewari in May 1857; defeated at Nasibpur near Narnaul, 16 November 1857
Rajasthan	Thakur Kushal Singh of Auwa (Marwar); rebels at Kotah	Defeated a joint force of the British and Jodhpur State; the Jodhpur Political Agent, Captain Monck Mason, was killed (September 1857)
Central India	Raja Shankar Shah and Raghunath Shah (Jabalpur); Rani Avantibai Lodhi (Ramgarh)	The Gond raja and his son were blown from cannon on 18 September 1857; Avantibai fought on and chose death over capture in March 1858
Hyderabad	Turrebaz Khan, Maulvi Allauddin	Attacked the British Residency on 17 July 1857, while the Nizam and his minister Salar Jung backed the British
Maharashtra	Rango Bapuji Gupte (Satara); sepoys at Kolhapur	Conspiracies and a sepoy mutiny at Kolhapur (1857), quickly crushed
Western Punjab	Rai Ahmad Khan Kharal	Raised the Gogera region; killed in September 1857

◆ PRELIMS TRAP LEADERS AND PLACES THAT GET MIXED UP

- **Kunwar Singh** belonged to **Bihar** (Jagdishpur, near Arrah), not to Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh.
- **Khan Bahadur Khan** led at **Bareilly**; **Bakht Khan** also came from the Bareilly troops but led at **Delhi**.
- **Maulvi Ahmadullah** led at **Faizabad**; **Maulvi Liaqat Ali** at **Allahabad**.
- **Surendra Sai** led the anti-British revolts in **Sambalpur** (Odisha); **Kattabomman** belongs to the Poligar wars of Tamil Nadu (c. 1799), long before 1857.
- **Chittor** was not a centre of the Revolt, whereas **Jhansi**, **Jagdishpur** and **Lucknow** were storm centres.

◆ PRELIMS FACT THE WOMEN OF 1857

- **Rani Lakshmibai** of Jhansi and **Begum Hazrat Mahal** of Awadh led armies and governments.
- **Jhalkari Bai**, a commander in the Rani's women's unit, is remembered for impersonating the Rani to cover her escape from Jhansi.
- **Uda Devi**, a Pasi woman, fought at **Sikandar Bagh**, Lucknow (16 November 1857).
- **Rani Avantibai Lodhi** of **Ramgarh** (present-day Dindori, Madhya Pradesh) led resistance after the execution of Raja Shankar Shah and died on 20 March 1858.

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- In 1943 the Indian National Army named its women's regiment after the **Rani of Jhansi** (Chapter 34).

09 How the Revolt Was Crushed

For the British, everything hinged on Delhi: as long as the emperor's banner flew there, the Revolt had a centre. Forces from the Punjab, held firmly by **John Lawrence**, camped on the Ridge north of the city through the summer of 1857. Their recapture of Delhi in September broke the Revolt's back, and one by one the other centres fell. The leaders who survived fought on as guerrillas into 1859.

The Revolt in time

Top: how the rising spread in 1857. Bottom: how the British won back the main centres, 1857–59.

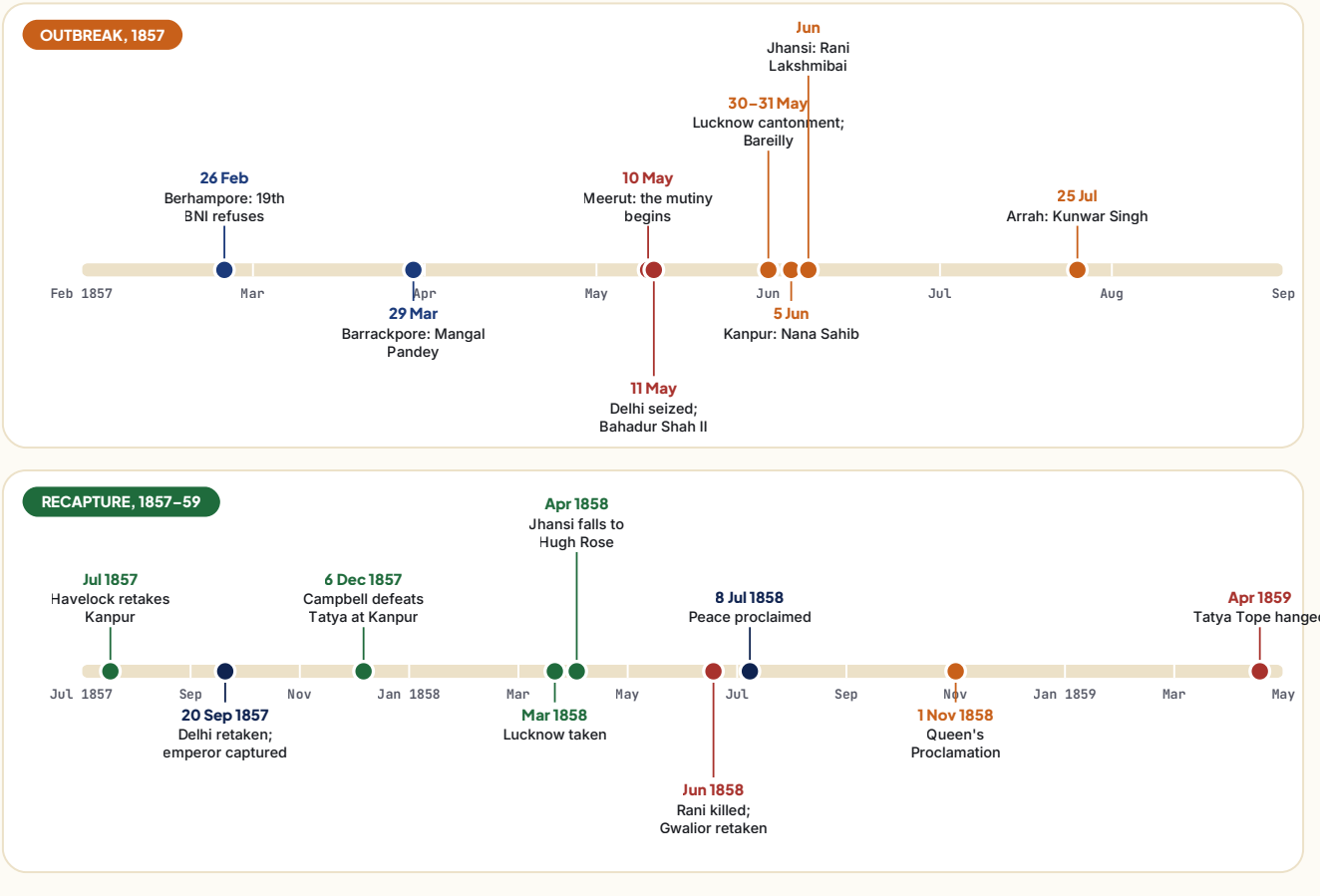


Fig. 18.4 The Revolt in time: outbreak at the main centres in 1857, and their recapture through 1858–59.

Delhi: September 1857

- After a long siege the British stormed Delhi on 14 September and had taken the city by **20 September 1857**; **John Nicholson**, who led the assault, was mortally wounded.
- **Bahadur Shah**, who had taken refuge in **Humayun's Tomb**, surrendered to **Lieutenant William Hodson**, who the next day shot two of the emperor's sons and a grandson near the Delhi Gate.
- Terrible vengeance was taken on the people of Delhi. The emperor was tried in the Red Fort in 1858 and exiled to **Rangoon**, where he died in 1862. With him the Mughal dynasty came to an end, and with Delhi's fall the Revolt lost its focal point.

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Kanpur and Lucknow

- **Henry Havelock** retook Kanpur in July 1857. In November, Tatya Tope with the Gwalior Contingent attacked it again, but **Sir Colin Campbell**, the new Commander-in-Chief, defeated him on **6 December 1857**.
- Havelock and **Sir James Outram** fought their way into the Lucknow Residency in September 1857 but could not lift the siege. Campbell evacuated the garrison in November 1857 and, with Gurkha troops sent from Nepal by Jung Bahadur joining the final assault, took Lucknow itself in **March 1858**; guerrilla fighting in Awadh went on until late 1858.
- **Nana Sahib** and **Begum Hazrat Mahal** escaped to **Nepal**. Nana disappeared there in 1859; the Begum died in Kathmandu in 1879.



LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 1857

The Sikandar Bagh

- A walled garden on the road into Lucknow, held by rebel sepoys, it was stormed on **16 November 1857** by the 93rd Highlanders and the 4th Punjab Regiment during Campbell's relief of the Residency.
- About 2,000 of its defenders were killed; the British buried their own dead but left the Indian bodies unburied.
- **Felice Beato** photographed the ruin in March–April 1858, reportedly with remains re-exposed for effect: one of the earliest photographs of the aftermath of war.

Fig. 18.5 The Sikandar Bagh at Lucknow, photographed by Felice Beato in 1858.

Jhansi and Gwalior

- Sir **Hugh Rose** besieged Jhansi from **23 March 1858**. Tatya Tope's attempt to relieve the town was beaten off at the **Betwa**, and Jhansi fell in early April 1858 (3–4 April).
- The Rani escaped on horseback with her adopted son and joined Tatya Tope at **Kalpi**. After Kalpi fell, they seized **Gwalior** on 1 June 1858; its ruler, **Jayajirao Scindia**, who stayed loyal to the British, fled to Agra.
- Rani Lakshmibai died fighting in soldier's dress at **Kotah-ki-Serai** near Gwalior on **17–18 June 1858**; her samadhi is at Gwalior. Rose's tribute was that she had been the only man among the rebels. Gwalior was retaken within days.

The Last Leaders

- **Tatya Tope** kept up a brilliant guerrilla campaign across Central India until he was betrayed by **Man Singh**, the Raja of Narwar, captured while asleep on **7 April 1859** and hanged at **Shivpuri** on 18 April 1859.
- **Kunwar Singh**, after campaigning as far as Azamgarh, returned home, won a last victory near Jagdishpur on 23 April 1858 and died of his wounds three days later. The British recaptured Jagdishpur and Bareilly in 1858.

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- By 1859, Bakht Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan (hanged in 1860) and Maulvi Ahmadullah (killed in June 1858) were all dead.
- By July 1858 the Revolt had been almost completely suppressed, and by the end of 1859 British authority was fully restored. The cost of suppression, in men, money and arms, was later charged to India itself.

10 Why the Revolt Failed

The rebels did not lack courage, and for a few months British rule in northern India hung in the balance. They failed because the Revolt was too narrow in space and in support, too divided in aims and leadership, and too weak in resources, against an enemy that was united, organised and able to draw on the rest of India and the empire.

Why Did the Revolt Not Spread Further?

- The Revolt was localised: the Bombay and Madras armies stayed loyal, India south of the Narmada was hardly disturbed, and Sind and Rajputana remained quiet. Punjab was held by John Lawrence, and its troops helped retake Delhi. By one estimate, not more than a fourth of the area and a tenth of the population was affected.
- The worst affected areas were western Bihar, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Delhi and the land between the Chambal and the Narmada.
- Outside India, **Dost Mohammad** of Afghanistan stayed friendly, and **Jung Bahadur** of Nepal sent Gurkha troops to help the British.

Who Stood with the British, and Why?

- Almost half the Indian soldiers did not join, and many fought against the rebels; Indian troops outnumbered British troops in the force that retook Delhi.
- Most princes backed the British: the **Scindia** of Gwalior, the **Holkar** of Indore, the **Nizam** of Hyderabad, the rulers of **Bhopal**, **Kashmir**, **Patiala**, **Jind**, **Nabha**, **Rampur** and **Baroda**, and the Rana rulers of Nepal. British writers praised the loyalty of **Sir Dinkar Rao**, minister of Gwalior, and **Salar Jung**, minister of Hyderabad. Canning said that if Scindia joined the mutiny he would have to "pack off tomorrow", and called the princes "breakwaters to the storm" that would otherwise have swept the British away.
- Each group had its own reasons: the Sikh chiefs feared a Mughal revival; the Rajputs and the Nizam feared a Maratha one; the Bengal zamindars were the creation of British rule; and big merchants and moneylenders, who suffered the rebels' anger, saw their interests safer with the British.
- The Awadh taluqdars deserted the cause once the British promised to return their estates.
- **The educated middle class** opposed the Revolt. It saw the rising as backward-looking and feudal, and still hoped that British rule would modernise India.
- Many peasants and lower castes outside the core areas showed little active sympathy, and the Bombay and Madras armies, recruited largely from lower castes, remained loyal.

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Why Could the Rebels Not Win the War?

- **No common ideal or programme:** the rebels were united only by hatred of foreign rule. The Rani fought for Jhansi, Nana Sahib for the Peshwaship, Khan Bahadur Khan for Rohilkhand and the Begum for her son's rights; they had no plan for what would replace British rule beyond restoring the old feudal order. Modern nationalism was still unknown in India.
- **Poor leadership and organisation:** the revolt had no central command, and the commissions appointed afterwards found no master plan. Rebel leaders were brave but no match for British generals such as the **Lawrence brothers**, **Nicholson**, **Outram**, **Havelock** and **Campbell**. John Lawrence admitted that had a single able leader arisen among the rebels, the British would have been lost beyond redemption.
- **Weapons and resources:** many rebels were peasants in uniform with swords, spears and old muskets; the British had the Enfield rifle, artillery, regular supplies and money. Nana Sahib is said to have remarked that the "blue cap" (the British soldier) killed before he fired.
- **Communications:** the electric telegraph, the railways and the post kept British commanders informed and allowed quick concentration of troops, while the rebels could hardly coordinate across centres.
- The Company was financially secure; the rebels were always short of cash.

CONNECTING THE DOTS FROM DOCTRINE OF LAPSE TO THE INTEGRATION OF THE STATES

- Dalhousie annexes Satara, Jhansi and Nagpur by lapse, and Awadh for "misgovernment" (1848–56)
- Dispossessed rulers lead the Revolt, but most princes stand by the British as "breakwaters"
- Queen's Proclamation (1858): no more annexation; adoption allowed; princes become allies under British paramountcy
- Princes used as a counterweight to nationalism, from the Chamber of Princes (1921) to the federal plan of 1935 (Chapter 32)
- 1947–49: over 560 states integrated into the Indian Union (Chapter 34)

11 What Kind of Revolt Was It?

Every generation has asked what 1857 really was, and the answer has often reflected the needs of the person asking. For imperial writers it had to be a mutiny, because anything larger would cast doubt on the justice of the Raj. For nationalists it had to be a war of independence, because the freedom struggle needed heroes and a history. Most historians now take a middle view, tied to the evidence of who fought, where and why.

Was It Only a Sepoy Mutiny?

- British historians such as **Sir John Seeley** called it "a wholly unpatriotic and selfish Sepoy Mutiny with no native leadership and no popular support"; **Sir John Lawrence** also saw it as a mutiny of the army. Such accounts focused on rebel sepoys and played down civilian rebellion and Indian grievances.

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- Some Indians of the time agreed, including **Syed Ahmad Khan**, and eyewitness writers such as **Munshi Jiwan Lal** and **Moinuddin** in Delhi and **Durgadas Bandyopadhyay** at Bareilly.
- Later British scholars, among them **Judith Brown**, admitted the bias: many Britons preferred to see a military mutiny because any wider reading would have questioned the nature of the Raj.
- The evidence of mass civilian participation, especially in Awadh and western Bihar, shows that it was much more than a mutiny.

◆ PRELIMS FACT VOICES FROM 1857: WHO WROTE WHAT

- **Mirza Ghalib** (1797–1869), the Urdu and Persian poet, lived through the siege of Delhi and recorded it in his Persian diary *Dastanbuy* (1858).
- **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**, a sadr amin at Bijnor in 1857 who stayed loyal, analysed its causes in *Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind* (The Causes of the Indian Revolt, 1859).
- **Vishnubhat Godse**, a Marathi priest, left an eyewitness account of Jhansi and the north in *Majha Pravas*.
- **V. D. Savarkar**'s *The Indian War of Independence, 1857* (1909) was banned by the British even before it was published.
- **Karl Marx** commented on the rising as it happened, in articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*.

Was It a National War of Independence?

- The view of 1857 as a planned national war of independence was first put forward by **V. D. Savarkar** in *The Indian War of Independence, 1857* (1909), who called it the "First War of Indian Independence".
- **Dr S. N. Sen**, whose *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (1957) was the official centenary history, judged that what began as a fight for religion ended as a war of independence.
- **Dr R. C. Majumdar** disagreed: the so-called First National War of Independence was, he wrote, neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence, since large parts of the country and many classes took no part.
- **Dr S. B. Chaudhuri** (*Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies*) saw two series of disturbances, a military mutiny and a civil rebellion, each with its own grievances, which came together; for him it was a genuine anti-foreign combine of all classes.

VIEW	HELD BY	IN A PHRASE
Sepoy mutiny	John Seeley, John Lawrence; K. Datta (mainly military, exploited by discontented princes and landlords)	A selfish mutiny without popular support
Religious war	L. E. R. Rees	A war of fanatic religionists against Christians
Clash of civilisations	T. R. Holmes	Civilisation against barbarism
Conspiracy	James Outram, W. Taylor	A Muslim conspiracy that made capital of Hindu grievances (Outram); a Hindu–Muslim conspiracy (Taylor)
National revolt	Benjamin Disraeli	A national rising, not a mere mutiny

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VIEW	HELD BY	IN A PHRASE
War of independence	V. D. Savarkar (1909)	A planned first war of independence
Religion to independence	S. N. Sen (1957)	Began as a fight for religion, ended as a war of independence
Not national	R. C. Majumdar	Neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence
Feudal outburst	Jawaharlal Nehru; M. N. Roy; Tara Chand	A feudal outburst with anti-foreign feeling; the last attempt of a dying order to recover lost glory
Marxist	Marxist historians; R. P. Dutt	A soldier-peasant democratic combine against foreign and feudal bondage
Elite-led rural revolt	Eric Stokes	Elitist in character, led by rural magnates; part of a historical continuum
Three phases	Percival Spear	The mutineers' passions centred on their grievances, not larger ideals; mutiny turned into political revolt in phases

So What Was It?

- It began as a sepoy mutiny but did not remain one: in Awadh and Bihar entire populations rose, and peasants, artisans, zamindars and religious leaders joined the soldiers.
- It was not national in the modern sense: the south and much of the west stayed out, the educated middle class opposed it, and the rebels did not yet think of themselves as one nation with a common political future. Its spirit was anti-foreign rather than nationalist.
- The balanced verdict is that it was more than a sepoy mutiny but less than a national war of independence: it carried seeds of nationalism and anti-imperialism, but not yet the idea of a common nationhood.
- The Marxist reading is weakened by the fact that most of its leaders came from feudal backgrounds; the "feudal reaction" reading overlooks the huge peasant participation.
- Whatever its nature, it became a symbol of resistance, and the freedom movement drew inspiration from its heroes. In that sense it was a turning point in modern Indian history.

12 After 1857: The Raj Remade

The Revolt was crushed, but it frightened the British into rethinking how India was ruled. The changes that followed served one aim: never again to face such a rising. Control was tightened at the top, the army was rebuilt around division, the princes and landlords were turned into allies, and the reforming zeal of the earlier decades gave way to caution and racial distance. The danger from feudal India had ended; the new challenge would come from educated, modern India.

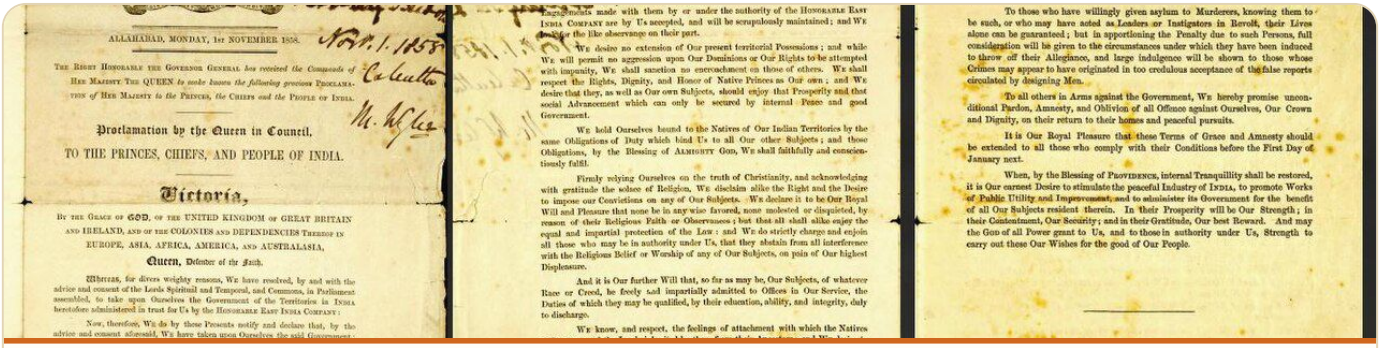
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From Company to Crown

- The **Government of India Act, 1858** (the Act for the Better Government of India, 2 August 1858) ended the rule of the East India Company and transferred the government of India to the British Crown.
- A **Secretary of State for India**, a member of the British cabinet responsible to Parliament, took over the powers of the Company, assisted by a 15-member advisory **Council of India**. Lord Stanley was the first Secretary of State.
- The dual control of the **Board of Control** and the **Court of Directors**, set up by Pitt's India Act (1784), was abolished.
- The Governor-General, as the Crown's representative, also became the **Viceroy**; **Lord Canning** was the first.
- The change was more formal than substantial: the same officials governed in the same way, but now the Crown and Parliament were directly answerable (Chapter 10).

What Did the Queen's Proclamation Promise?

The new order was announced by Lord Canning at a durbar at **Allahabad** on **1 November 1858**, in a proclamation issued in Queen Victoria's name.



ALLAHABAD, MONDAY, 1st NOVEMBER 1858.

Proclamation by the Queen in Council,

TO THE PRINCES, CHIEFS, AND PEOPLE OF INDIA.

Victoria,

By the Grace of GOD, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the Colonies and Dependencies thereof in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australasia,

Queen, Defender of the Faith.

Whereas, for divers weighty reasons, We have resolved, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in Parliament assembled, to take upon Ourselves the Government of the Territories in India heretofore administered in trust for Us by the Honorable East India Company:

Now, therefore, We do by these Presents notify and declare that, by the advice and consent aforesaid, We have taken upon Ourselves the said Government;

engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honorable East India Company are by Us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained; and We look for the like observance on their part.

We desire no extension of Our present territorial Possessions; and while We will permit no aggression upon Our Dominions or Our Rights to be attempted with impunity, We shall sanction no encroachment on those of others. We shall respect the Rights, Dignity, and Honor of Native Princes as Our own; and We desire that they, as well as Our own Subjects, should enjoy that Prosperity and that social Advancement which can only be secured by internal Peace and good Government.

We hold Ourselves bound to the Natives of Our Indian Territories by the same Obligations of Duty which bind Us to all Our other Subjects; and those Obligations, by the Blessing of Almighty God, We shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

Firmly relying Ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of Religion, We disclaim alike the Right and the Desire to impose Our Convictions on any of Our Subjects. We declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure that none be in any wise favored, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their Religious Faith or Observances; but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the Law: and We do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under Us, that they abstain from all interference with the Religious Belief or Worship of any of Our Subjects, on pain of Our highest Displeasure.

And it is Our further Will that, so far as may be, Our Subjects, of whatever Race or Creed, be freely and impartially admitted to Offices in Our Service, the Duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge.

We know, and respect, the feelings of attachment with which the Natives

To those who have willingly given asylum to Murderers, knowing them to be such, or who may have acted as Leaders or Instigators in Revolt, their Lives alone can be guaranteed; but in apportioning the Penalty due to such Persons, full consideration will be given to the circumstances under which they have been induced to throw off their Allegiance, and large indulgence will be shown to those whose Crimes may appear to have originated in too credulous acceptance of the false reports circulated by designing Men.

To all others in Arms against the Government, We hereby promise unconditional Pardon, Amnesty, and Oblivion of all Offence against Ourselves, Our Crown and Dignity, on their return to their homes and peaceful pursuits.

It is Our Royal Pleasure that these Terms of Grace and Amnesty should be extended to all those who comply with their Conditions before the First Day of January next.

When, by the Blessing of Providence, internal Tranquillity shall be restored, it is Our earnest Desire to stimulate the peaceful Industry of India, to promote Works of Public Utility and Improvement, and to administer its Government for the benefit of all Our Subjects resident therein. In their Prosperity will be Our Strength; in their Contentment, Our Security; and in their Gratitude, Our best Reward. And may the God of all Power grant to Us, and to those in authority under Us, Strength to carry out these Our Wishes for the good of Our People.

PRELIMS FOCUS

Queen's Proclamation (1858) at a glance

- Read by Lord Canning at **Allahabad** on **1 November 1858**; the Governor-General was now also the **Viceroy**.
- Its objects included disclaiming any intention to annex Indian states and placing the administration under the Crown. It did **not** deal with regulating the Company's trade: the Company's trade monopoly had already ended in 1813 (India) and 1833 (China and tea).
- Its promise of equal admission to office led to the **Indian Civil Service Act, 1861**, but the examination was held only in London, which kept the service largely British.

Fig. 18.6 Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858, which announced the end of Company rule.

- It disclaimed any desire for further annexation and promised to respect the rights, dignity and honour of the native princes; existing treaties with them would be honoured.
- It declared that the government of India was now in the hands of the Crown.
- It promised freedom of religion and non-interference in religious belief, equal and impartial protection of the law, and due regard to ancient rights, usages and customs.
- It promised that Indians, of whatever race or creed, would be freely and impartially admitted to offices for which they were qualified.

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- It offered a pardon to all rebels except those directly involved in the murder of British subjects.

Princes and Landlords: From Victims to Allies

- The policy of annexation was abandoned and the Doctrine of Lapse given up. From 1860, **sanads of adoption** assured the princes that their adopted heirs would succeed.
- Loyal rulers were rewarded: the Nizam's debts were cancelled and the districts of Raichur and Dharaseo returned to him (Berar stayed under British management), and Gwalior, Patiala, Jind, Rampur, Baroda and the Rajput princes received titles, land or concessions. The new **Order of the Star of India** (1861) honoured them.
- In Awadh, taluqdars who submitted had their estates restored, on condition of loyalty and of passing on information.
- In return the states had to accept the **paramountcy** of the Crown: they were treated as parts of a single charge. In 1876 Queen Victoria took the title **Empress of India**, proclaimed at the Delhi Durbar of 1 January 1877, and later Curzon described the princes as agents of the Crown.
- Princes and landlords were now cultivated as a conservative counterweight to the rising nationalists.

An Army Built on Division

The army, which had been at the centre of the outbreak, was rebuilt on the recommendations of the **Peel Commission** (1858–59). British military policy came to be dominated by the idea of **"division and counterpoise"**: the proportion of European to Indian troops was fixed at about **1:2 in the Bengal Army** and **1:3 in the Bombay and Madras armies**.

- Europeans were posted at key points, and artillery and all higher posts were reserved for them; Indian artillery was largely abolished except for a few mountain batteries. Till the first decade of the twentieth century, no Indian was given the king's commission.
- Soldiers from Awadh, Bihar and Central India, who had rebelled, were now labelled non-martial, while Punjabis, Gurkhas and Pathans, who had helped crush the Revolt, were favoured as "**martial races**". By 1875 about half the Indian army came from Punjab.
- Regiments were mixed or separated by caste, community and region so that no common feeling could grow. The Punjab Committee on Army Organisation (1858) explained the logic of counterpoise, and Secretary of State **Sir Charles Wood** wrote in 1861 that if one regiment mutinied he wanted the next to be so alien that it would fire on it.
- British regiments in India were rotated through periodical tours from England under what was termed the 'linked-battalion' scheme, so that European troops stayed fresh and loyal.
- The **Army Amalgamation Scheme** (1861) merged the Company's European troops into the British Army. Some Company soldiers who resented the transfer protested in the "**White Mutiny**" (1859) and many were allowed to go home.

A Colder, More Cautious Raj

- **Councils:** the British concluded that ignorance of Indian opinion had helped cause the Revolt. Following Sir Bartle Frere's minute of 1860, the **Indian Councils Act, 1861** brought a few Indians, mostly princes and landlords, into the legislative councils, a modest start to representation (Chapter 26).

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- **Reform abandoned:** the Proclamation's promise of non-interference ended the era of social reform. The government now argued that Indian society's defects made Indians unfit to rule themselves. As Percival Spear put it, the government's "honeymoon with progress" was over; the historian Thomas Metcalf called the new approach a "conservative brand of liberalism".
- **Divide and rule:** the Hindu–Muslim unity of 1857 alarmed the British. Muslims, held responsible for the rising because it had rallied round the Mughal emperor, were first repressed; later the policy swung to cultivating them as a counterweight, which sowed the seeds of communal politics.
- **Racism:** racial bitterness was the worst legacy of 1857. "Europeans only" signs appeared in railway carriages, clubs and parks; the British humour magazine *Punch* caricatured Indians as subhuman; and imperial rule was justified as the "**white man's burden**" of civilising others.
- **Exploitation:** the era of territorial conquest gave way to an era of systematic economic exploitation, and the later reactionary policies of viceroys such as Lytton, Dufferin and Curzon followed this new imperial ideology.
- **A new challenger:** the danger from feudal India was over; the next challenge would come from a modern, educated India, fed on the liberal ideas of thinkers such as John Stuart Mill.
- **Hostility to the educated:** though the educated classes had not joined the Revolt, the government grew suspicious of higher education and the political awakening it produced, especially after the Congress was founded in 1885.

AREA	BEFORE 1857	AFTER 1858
Who ruled	East India Company, under the Board of Control (dual control)	The Crown, through a Secretary of State and the Council of India
Head in India	Governor-General	Governor-General and Viceroy
Princely states	Annexation (lapse, misgovernment)	No annexation; adoption allowed; paramountcy of the Crown
Army	Large Indian majority; Bengal Army dominant	More Europeans (1:2, 1:3); artillery European; "martial races"; divide and counterpoise
Social policy	Active reform (sati, widow remarriage)	Non-interference; alliance with conservative elites
Representation	No Indians in legislation	Nominated Indians in councils (1861)
Relations	Distant	Racial bitterness; "white man's burden"

CONNECTING THE DOTS HOW 1857 LIVED ON IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

- 1857: Rani Lakshmibai, Tatya Tope, Kunwar Singh and Bahadur Shah become martyrs of the Revolt
- 1909: Savarkar's book recasts 1857 as the "First War of Indian Independence"; revolutionaries take it as their model (Chapter 25)
- 1943: the Indian National Army names its women's regiment after the Rani of Jhansi (Chapter 34)

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- 1957: the centenary is marked with an official history; 1857 enters the national story as the first great struggle

13 The Big Picture

The Revolt of 1857 was the last great effort to save India under traditional leadership and the first great popular effort to throw off foreign rule. It failed because it belonged to the old world: it looked back to a Mughal emperor and a Peshwa, and it could not unite India's many regions and classes behind a common future. Yet by shattering the myth of British invincibility, and by showing what Hindus and Muslims, sepoys and peasants could do together, it left a tradition of resistance that later nationalists claimed as their own.

- **Continuity:** 1857 was the culmination of a century of local risings by peasants, tribals and dispossessed chiefs (Chapter 17), not a bolt from the blue.
- **Change:** it ended Company rule and territorial expansion; British policy turned to direct Crown rule, alliance with princes and landlords, an army built on division, and economic exploitation rather than conquest.
- **Legacy:** the British learnt to divide; Indians learnt that armed revolt under old leaders, with primitive arms against modern weapons, could not succeed, and the atrocities on both sides convinced many educated Indians that violence should be avoided in any future struggle. Yet 1857 left local traditions of resistance and heroes such as Lakshmibai, Kunwar Singh and Tatya Tope for later nationalists. The next challenge came from the English-educated middle class, through associations, the press and the Congress (Chapters 22–23).
- **For a Mains answer:** link causes across levels (political, economic, socio-religious, military); show the shift from mutiny to civil rebellion with examples (Awadh, Bihar, Shah Mal); weigh the historians' views with evidence; and present 1857 as a watershed in British policy.

✦ Prelims Quick Revision

- **Start**: Meerut, 10 May 1857 (3rd Light Cavalry, 85 men fettered on 9 May); Delhi taken 11–12 May.
- **Earlier sparks**: Berhampore 19th BNI (26 Feb 1857); Mangal Pandey, 34th BNI, Barrackpore (29 Mar; hanged 8 Apr); GSE Act 1856 and Post Office Act 1854 had angered sepoys.
- **Immediate cause**: greased cartridges of the Enfield rifle (Pattern 1853), bitten before loading; replaced the Brown Bess.
- **Lapse annexations**: Satara 1848, Jaitpur and Sambalpur 1849, Baghat 1850, Udaipur 1852, Jhansi 1853, Nagpur 1854.
- **Awadh**: annexed Feb 1856 for 'misgovernment'; Wajid Ali Shah to Calcutta; Summary Settlement 1856 cut taluqdars' villages from 67% to 38%.
- **Delhi**: Bahadur Shah II emperor; Court of 10 (6 army, 4 civil); Bakht Khan 'Sahib-i-Alam Bahadur'; retaken 20 Sept 1857 (Nicholson, Hodson).
- **Leaders**: Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope (Kanpur), Hazrat Mahal (Lucknow), Lakshmibai (Jhansi), Kunwar Singh (Arrah–Jagdishpur), Khan Bahadur Khan (Bareilly), Ahmadullah (Faizabad), Liaqat Ali (Allahabad).

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- **Fates**: Lakshmibai killed at Kotah-ki-Serai (June 1858); Tatya Tope betrayed by Man Singh, hanged at Shivpuri (Apr 1859); Bahadur Shah died in Rangoon (1862).
- **Loyal**: Scindia, Holkar, Nizam (Salar Jung), Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Kashmir, Rampur, Bhopal; Nepal's Jung Bahadur; Canning: 'breakwaters to the storm'.
- **Views**: Savarkar (1909) first war of independence; S. N. Sen (1957) religion to independence; R. C. Majumdar neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence.
- **Act of 1858**: Crown rule; Secretary of State + 15-member Council of India; Board of Control and Court of Directors abolished; Canning first Viceroy.
- **Proclamation**: Allahabad, 1 Nov 1858; no annexation, religious freedom, equal admission to office, amnesty.

Previous Year Questions

Prelims

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). Taluqdars were disarmed and their forts destroyed, so statement 1 is wrong; the Summary Settlement of 1856 treated them as interlopers and aimed to settle directly with cultivators (Section 03). (PROVISIONAL KEY)

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 renounced annexation and announced Crown rule; the Company's trade monopoly had ended long before, in 1813 and 1833 (Section 12).

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2006 Who was the Governor-General of India during the Sepoy Mutiny?

a Lord Canning | b Lord Dalhousie | c Lord Hardinge | d Lord Lytton

Answer: (a). Lord Canning (1856–62) was Governor-General throughout the Revolt and became the first Viceroy in 1858 (Section 06).

2006 With reference to the revolt of the year 1857, who of the following was betrayed by a friend captured and put to death by the British?

a Nana Sahib | b Kunwar Singh | c Khan Bahadur Khan | d Tantia Tope

Answer: (d). Tatya Tope was betrayed by Man Singh of Narwar, captured in April 1859 and hanged at Shivpuri (Section 09).

2005 Which one of the following places did Kunwar Singh, a prominent leader of the Revolt of 1857 belong to?

a Bihar | b Madhya Pradesh | c Rajasthan | d Uttar Pradesh

Answer: (a). Kunwar Singh was the zamindar of Jagdishpur near Arrah in Bihar (Section 08).

2005 Which one of the following territories was not affected by the Revolt of 1857?

a Jhansi | b Chittor | c Jagdishpur | d Lucknow

Answer: (b). Chittor saw no rising; Jhansi, Jagdishpur and Lucknow were storm centres of the Revolt (Section 08).

2000 "In this instance we could not play off the Mohammedans against the Hindus". To which one of the following events did this remark of Aitchison relate ?

a Revolt of 1857

b Champaran Satyagraha (1917)

c Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement (1919-22)

d August Movement of 1942

Answer: (a). Aitchison's remark expressed British dismay at the Hindu–Muslim unity of 1857 (Section 07).

Mains

2019 GS I · 10 MARKS

The 1857 Uprising was the culmination of the recurrent big and small local rebellions that had occurred in the preceding hundred years of British rule. Elucidate.

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2016 GS I · 12.5 MARKS

Explain how the Uprising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India.

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UNIT VI
4 CHAPTERS

The Gandhian Era I (1915–1929)

Gandhi's ideas and early satyagrahas, the Rowlatt Satyagraha, Jallianwala Bagh and the Khilafat–Non-Cooperation Movement, the Swarajists and the revolutionaries of the 1920s, and the road from the Simon Commission to Purna Swaraj.

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28 Rowlatt, Jallianwala and the Khilafat–Non-Cooperation Movement (1919–22) 825
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From Porbandar to the London Bar · A "Coolie Barrister" in Natal (1893–94) · The Moderate Phase (1894–1906) · The Black Act and the Birth of Satyagraha · Tolstoy Farm and the Great March (1910–14) · Truth, Non-Violence and Satyagraha · Swaraj, Sarvodaya and the Good Society · The Gandhian Method of Struggle · Home Again: A Year of Listening (1915–16) · Champaran 1917: The Stain of Indigo · Ahmedabad 1918: The First Fast · Kheda 1918: Peasants Withhold Revenue · Gandhi's Place in the National Movement · The Big Picture

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30 **Simon Commission, Nehru Report and Purna Swaraj**
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MODERN INDIAN HISTORY · PRELIMS · GS PAPER I

Rowlatt, Jallianwala and the Khilafat–Non-Cooperation Movement (1919–22)

Indians expected a reward for their part in the First World War. Instead, in March 1919, came the **Rowlatt Act**, which let the government imprison them without trial; Gandhi's call to satyagraha was answered by the massacre at **Jallianwala Bagh**. Within a year the Punjab wrongs, the fate of the Ottoman Khalifa and reforms that fell far short of self-government merged into the **Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement**, the first time Indians of every class and community moved together under one leader. Gandhi promised swaraj in a year; after **Chauri Chaura** in February 1922 he called the movement off. But Indian politics was never again the affair of a few.

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; the Freedom Struggle: its various stages and important contributors and contributions from different parts of the country

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10 Many Movements in One
11 Repression, Bardoli and Chauri Chaura
12 Why Withdraw? Assessing the Movement
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01 A Nation Waiting for Its Reward

By 1918 Indian politics had reached an impasse. The Moderates' petitions and the Extremists' boycotts had not won self-government, and the Home Rule Leagues of Tilak and Annie Besant (1916) had lost momentum once the government cracked down and the reform proposals were announced (Chapter 25). What changed the situation was the war, which left India poorer, angrier and more expectant than before.

Why Were Indians So Restless in 1919?

- **Economic distress:** prices had nearly doubled during the war; taxes, rents and war loans weighed on peasants and townspeople; industrial production fell after the wartime boom; and a severe influenza epidemic in 1918 killed millions.
- **Disappointed hopes:** Edwin Montagu's declaration of **20 August 1917** had promised the "progressive realisation of responsible government in India" within the Empire, but the Montagu–Chelmsford Report (1918) and the Government of India Act, 1919 offered only **dyarchy** in the provinces, with real power still in British hands (Chapter 26).
- **Repression instead of reward:** people who had expected a reward for wartime loyalty were met, as one leader put it, with bullets and "black laws".
- **A world in ferment:** nationalists everywhere were disillusioned with imperialism after the war, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 showed that ordinary people could overthrow a mighty empire.
- **Muslim anger:** Turkey's defeat, and the prospect of a harsh peace imposed on the Ottoman Sultan, who was also the **Khalifa**, alarmed Indian Muslims (Section 05).

Where Did Gandhi Stand?



BEFORE 1919

Gandhi's three local experiments

- **Champaran** (Bihar, 1917): indigo peasants; his first civil disobedience in India.
- **Ahmedabad** (1918): mill workers' wage dispute; his first hunger strike.
- **Kheda** (Gujarat, 1918): peasants refused revenue after crop failure; his first non-cooperation.
- He still held the **Kaiser-i-Hind** gold medal (1915), awarded for his ambulance work in South Africa, which he returned in 1920.

Fig. 28.1 Hriday Kunj, Gandhi's home at the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, where the ashram moved in 1917.

Gandhi had returned from South Africa in January 1915 and had won his spurs in three local struggles, at **Champaran** (1917), **Ahmedabad** (1918) and **Kheda** (1918) (Chapter 27). He was still a cooperator. In April 1918 he attended Lord Chelmsford's **War Conference** at Delhi and supported the resolution on recruitment in a

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single sentence of Hindustani, the first time anyone had spoken in that language at such a meeting, though his friend C. F. Andrews (Dinabandhu) questioned whether he should take part; and he even toured Kheda urging peasants to enlist, in the belief that loyal help in the Empire's hour of need would earn India Home Rule. The events of 1919 turned this loyal cooperator into the leader of non-cooperation.

02 The Rowlatt Act: "No Vakil, No Daleel, No Appeal"

The government's answer to post-war unrest was not reform but control. Wartime emergency powers under the Defence of India Act were about to lapse, and officials wanted permanent powers to deal with revolutionaries. They got them from a committee whose report coincided with the Montagu–Chelmsford proposals, so that the same year that promised reform also brought the most hated law of the period.

What Did the Act Provide?

- In 1917 the government appointed a **Sedition Committee** under Justice **Sidney Rowlatt** to investigate revolutionary crime; its report (1918) recommended permanent emergency powers. Two bills followed; one of them became the **Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919**, popularly called the **Rowlatt Act**.
- It was introduced just six months before the Montford reforms were to come into force. Of the two bills, one was dropped; the other, in effect a permanent version of the wartime **Defence of India Act, 1915**, was pushed through the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1919, under the Viceroy **Lord Chelmsford** (1916–21), although **every elected Indian member voted against it**. Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mazharul Haque resigned their seats in protest.
- The Act allowed the government to imprison people **without trial** for up to two years and to try political cases before special benches of three High Court judges, sitting in camera, whose verdict could not be appealed; it allowed search and arrest without warrant and admitted evidence not acceptable under the Evidence Act. In effect it suspended the right of **habeas corpus**.
- The committee had even proposed that possession of a seditious newspaper be enough evidence of guilt, and wartime curbs on speech, assembly and the press were in effect made permanent.
- Indians summed it up in a slogan: **"Na vakil, na daleel, na appeal"** (no lawyer, no argument, no appeal), and called it the "Black Act".
- Gandhi condemned it as the expression of distrust of the common man, powers out of all proportion to any danger at a time when the Viceroy already had powers to rule by ordinance.

◆ PRELIMS FACT THE ROWLATT ACT AT A GLANCE

- Official name: **Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919**; based on the report of the **Sedition Committee** (1918) chaired by Justice Sidney Rowlatt.
- Central aim: **imprisonment without trial** and summary trials for political offences; the press was controlled by a separate law, the Indian Press Act, 1910.
- The Act was hardly ever used, and it was **repealed in 1922** along with other repressive laws, after a committee chaired by Tej Bahadur Sapru reviewed them.

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03 The Rowlatt Satyagraha (1919)

No existing organisation was willing to take up Gandhi's new weapon, so he built one. The Rowlatt Satyagraha was his **first all-India campaign**, and it showed both the reach of his appeal and the danger of calling on millions who had not been trained in non-violence.

How Was the Satyagraha Organised?

- On **24 February** 1919 Gandhi founded the **Satyagraha Sabha** at Bombay; its members pledged to disobey the Rowlatt law and other unjust laws civilly, and to follow truth and refrain from violence.
- Gandhi used the network of the **Home Rule Leagues**: their younger members, such as Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankarlal Banker, Umar Sobani and B. G. Horniman, formed his main cadre. Mahadev Desai, C. Rajagopalachari, C. Vijayaraghavachariar and S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar also backed him, as did pan-Islamic leaders such as **Abdul Bari** of the Firangi Mahal in Lucknow and Dr **M. A. Ansari**.
- The Liberals (Surendranath Banerjea, Dinshaw Wacha, Tej Bahadur Sapru, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri) opposed the satyagraha, fearing it would endanger the coming reforms; Annie Besant also kept away.
- The chosen forms of protest were a nationwide hartal with fasting and prayer, civil disobedience against specific laws, and courting arrest.
- Swami Shraddhanand suggested a no-tax campaign as a protest, which Gandhi did not adopt.

What Happened in April 1919?

- Gandhi called for a nationwide **hartal**: a day of strike, fasting and prayer. Fixed first for 30 March, it was moved to **6 April** 1919. Delhi observed it on 30 March, when police fired on a procession. In a remarkable display of Hindu–Muslim unity, the Arya Samaj leader **Swami Shraddhanand** was invited to speak from the pulpit of the **Jama Masjid** in early April.
- Across the country shops closed, railway workshops struck and huge rallies were held. Satyagrahis sold copies of Gandhi's banned books, *Hind Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya* (his Gujarati version of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*), in open breach of the law.
- On his way to Punjab, Gandhi was stopped at **Palwal** near Delhi on 9 April and sent back to Bombay. The news of his arrest set off riots in **Bombay**, **Ahmedabad** (where martial law was imposed), **Delhi** and above all **Amritsar**.
- Shocked by the violence, Gandhi withdrew the satyagraha on **18 April** 1919, calling his own call to civil disobedience before people were trained for it a "**Himalayan miscalculation**".

Was It a Failure?

As a campaign, it failed: the Act stayed on the books, and the agitation lapsed into violence that brought fierce repression. It was strongest in the cities, the Congress hardly figured in it, and people joined for their own economic grievances as much as for the Act. Yet it was the biggest and most violent anti-British upsurge since 1857, the **first nationwide popular agitation**, and it marked the beginning of mass politics: the masses now had a way to act rather than merely complain, and peasants, artisans and the urban poor would play an ever larger part in the struggle. Above all it made Gandhi a national leader: Punjab, which he had never visited, rose in his name. When the authorities deported B. G. Horniman, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* (founded by Pherozeshah Mehta in 1910), Umar Sobani and Shankarlal Banker asked Gandhi to edit

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their English weekly *Young India*; they also gave him the Gujarati monthly *Navajivan*, which became a weekly with Indulal Yajnik's help. Each soon reached about 40,000 readers, and through them Gandhi trained a following in satyagraha.

04 Amritsar, 13 April 1919: Jallianwala Bagh

Punjab was already a tinderbox. Under its Lieutenant-Governor, **Sir Michael O'Dwyer**, the province had borne forced war recruitment and war loans, harsh repression of the Ghadar rising (Chapter 25) and soaring food prices. The striking unity of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the Rowlatt hartals frightened the authorities, and on 9 April, Ram Navami, they watched Hindus and Muslims celebrate the festival together.

How Did a Protest Become a Massacre?

- On 10 April the government arrested two popular Amritsar leaders, **Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew** and **Dr Satyapal**, and secretly sent them to Dharamsala. Crowds that marched to demand their release were fired on; in the riot that followed, banks, the town hall and the railway station were attacked, five Europeans were killed, and an English missionary, **Marcella Sherwood**, was assaulted.
- The army took over Amritsar under **Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer**. On the morning of 13 April he banned processions and gatherings of more than a few people, but the order was poorly announced.
- On **13 April** 1919, the festival of **Baisakhi**, a large unarmed crowd gathered in the **Jallianwala Bagh**, a walled ground with a single narrow entrance, to protest against the arrests; many were villagers who had come for the festival and knew nothing of the ban. Of the roughly 20,000 people present, the meeting had peacefully passed two resolutions, for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act and against the firing of 10 April.
- Dyer arrived with fifty riflemen, blocked the exit and, without warning, ordered them to fire into the crowd. The firing went on for about ten minutes, some 1,650 rounds, until the ammunition was nearly spent.
- The official figure was **379** killed and about 1,100 wounded; the Congress inquiry put the toll at about 1,000 killed and over 1,500 wounded.
- Gandhi declared that cooperation with this "satanic" regime was now impossible; for the historian A. J. P. Taylor, Jallianwala Bagh was the decisive moment when Indians were alienated from British rule.

What Followed in Punjab?

- Martial law was proclaimed in Punjab. Suspects were flogged in public; in the lane where Marcella Sherwood had been assaulted, Indians were forced to crawl on their bellies; aircraft bombed and machine-gunned crowds at **Gujranwala**; and newspapers were silenced.
- Even before any inquiry began, the government passed an **Indemnity Act** to protect its officers, which Motilal Nehru and others condemned as a "whitewashing bill".
- In Britain, Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, called the massacre "monstrous", and the former Prime Minister H. H. Asquith called it one of the worst outrages in British history. Dyer was relieved of his command in March 1920 and sent back to England, but he faced no legal action and kept his pension.

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- The House of Lords passed a motion in Dyer's favour, and the *Morning Post* raised about £26,000 for him; Rudyard Kipling was among the contributors. In Amritsar, the clergy of the Golden Temple, led by Arur Singh, honoured Dyer, which gave fresh force to the Sikh demand to reform the management of the gurdwaras (Section 10).
- The Congress held its 1919 session at **Amritsar** under **Motilal Nehru**. For a later generation, above all Bhagat Singh's Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the massacre became a symbol to revive a people grown weary after non-cooperation.

How Was Dyer Judged?

On 14 October 1919 the government announced the **Disorders Inquiry Committee**, known as the **Hunter Committee** after its chairman, Lord William Hunter, a former Solicitor General for Scotland. It was to inquire into the disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and Punjab. It began work in Delhi on 29 October and heard the Amritsar witnesses in Lahore in November. Dyer told it frankly that he had meant to produce a "moral effect" throughout Punjab, that he could probably have dispersed the crowd without firing, and that tending the wounded was not his job.

INQUIRY	MEMBERS	FINDINGS
Hunter Committee: majority report (March 1920)	Lord Hunter and the British members	No warning to disperse and the length of firing were grave errors; Dyer exceeded his authority; there was no conspiracy to overthrow British rule. No penal or disciplinary action was recommended.
Hunter Committee: minority report	The three Indian members: Sir Chimanlal Setalvad (Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University), Pandit Jagat Narayan (lawyer, United Provinces) and Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Khan (lawyer, Gwalior)	The ban on meetings was not properly publicised; the crowd was innocent and peaceful; Dyer should have helped the wounded; his action was "inhuman and un-British"
Congress inquiry	Gandhi (who drafted the report), Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Abbas Tyabji and M. R. Jayakar	Boycotted the Hunter Committee; condemned Dyer's act as inhuman and held that martial law in Punjab was unjustified



THE SITE TODAY

Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial

- Gandhi led a national appeal to buy the ground, which a memorial committee acquired in 1923; since the **Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act**, 1951, a national trust has managed it.
- The flame-shaped memorial, designed by the American architect **Benjamin Polk**, was inaugurated by President Rajendra Prasad on **13 April** 1961.
- A plaque at the **Martyrs' Well** records 120 bodies recovered from it; bullet-marked walls are preserved, and the complex was renovated in 2019–21.

Fig. 28.2 Bullet marks preserved in a wall of the Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar.

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PRELIMS FACT REACTIONS TO JALLIANWALA BAGH

- **Rabindranath Tagore** renounced his knighthood in a letter to the Viceroy at the end of May 1919.
- **Sir C. Sankaran Nair** resigned from the Viceroy's Executive Council in protest against the Punjab repression.
- Secretary of State **Edwin Montagu** condemned Dyer's action in Parliament, describing it as "**preventive murder**".
- Gandhi later returned his **Kaiser-i-Hind** medal (August 1920), citing the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs.
- **Udham Singh**, who had been in Amritsar in 1919 and later took the name Ram Mohammad Singh Azad, shot Sir Michael O'Dwyer dead at Caxton Hall, London, on 13 March 1940; he was hanged that July, and his ashes were brought back to India in 1974.

05 The Khilafat Question

While Punjab bled, a second grievance was rising among Indian Muslims. The Ottoman Sultan of Turkey was also the **Khalifa** (Caliph), regarded by many Sunni Muslims as the spiritual head of the Islamic world and the guardian of its holy places. During the war Turkey had fought on Germany's side, and Indian Muslims had stayed loyal to Britain after assurances that Turkey would be treated generously.

What Were the "Khilafat Wrongs"?

- Turkey had fought the war on the side of Germany and Austria. The peace that followed broke up the Ottoman Empire: Arab lands passed under British and French control, and the **Treaty of Sèvres** (August 1920) left the Sultan a shrunken state. Rumours of the Khalifa's humiliation created the feeling that Islam itself was in danger.
- The Khilafat leaders demanded that the Khalifa keep control over the Muslim holy places, that he be left with enough territory to remain head of the Islamic world, and that the **Jazirat-ul-Arab** (Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Palestine) remain under Muslim sovereignty.
- The ground for joint Hindu–Muslim action had already been prepared: the **Lucknow Pact** (1916) had brought the Congress and the League together, the Rowlatt agitation had united Hindus and Muslims in the streets, and radical young nationalists such as Muhammad Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasan Imam had displaced the cautious Aligarh school in Muslim politics.
- Pan-Islamic in form, the cause had little to do with India itself; it worked as a **symbol** that could unite a Muslim community divided by region, class and sect, and bring it into anti-British politics.

Who Led the Khilafat Movement?

- A **Khilafat Committee** was formed in **Bombay in March 1919**, on the initiative of Muslim merchants. Its leaders included the **Ali brothers** (Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali), **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**, **Hakim Ajmal Khan**, **Hasrat Mohani** and **Dr M. A. Ansari**.
- Muhammad Ali Jauhar edited the English weekly *Comrade* (1911) and the Urdu daily *Hamdard* (1913).
- 17 October 1919 was observed as **Khilafat Day** across India. At the **All-India Khilafat Conference** at Delhi (23–24 November 1919), to which Hindu leaders were invited, Gandhi presided over the joint session; Hasrat Mohani called for a boycott of British goods, and the idea of non-cooperation was first raised.

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- The movement had two trends. A moderate one, led by Bombay merchants, preferred petitions, a deputation to the Viceroy and representation at the Paris Peace Conference. A radical one, led by the younger leaders (the Ali brothers, Azad) and the ulama, wanted mass agitation in alliance with Hindus.
- A **Central Khilafat Committee** led by the Ali brothers took charge, with Gandhi as its guiding figure. A joint Hindu–Muslim deputation to the Viceroy in early 1920 failed, and in February Gandhi announced that he would lead non-cooperation if the peace terms did not satisfy Indian Muslims. When the deputations came back empty-handed, the terms of the treaty with Turkey were published, and the Hunter Committee's majority report (May 1920) seemed to excuse Dyer, the radicals took charge.

Why Did Gandhi Back the Khalifa?

Gandhi saw in the Khilafat issue a chance that might not come again for a century: to unite Hindus and Muslims in a common struggle and bring Muslims into the mainstream of the national movement. Many disagreed. **Jinnah** warned against encouraging religious fanaticism and opposed Gandhi's part in a religious cause; **Tilak** was wary of an alliance with Muslim leaders on a religious question and doubted satyagraha as a method, though Gandhi worked hard to win him over; and **Madan Mohan Malaviya** did not support the Khilafat agitation.

The Congress came round for three reasons: the Khilafat offered a golden opportunity to cement Hindu–Muslim unity and bring the Muslim masses into the national movement; after Punjab and the partisan Hunter report, it had lost faith in constitutional methods; and it could see that the masses were eager to express their discontent. The **Muslim League** too decided to back the Congress on political questions.

◆ PRELIMS FACT FACES OF THE KHILAFAT YEARS

- **Saifuddin Kitchlew** (1888–1963): Amritsar lawyer; a founder member of the Jamia Millia Islamia; started the Urdu daily *Tanzim* and the Swaraj Ashram, Amritsar (1921); opposed the demand for Pakistan; Stalin Peace Prize (1952).
- **Hasrat Mohani** (Syed Fazl-ul-Hasan, 1875–1951): Urdu poet; credited with the slogan "Inquilab Zindabad"; first to demand complete independence, at the Ahmedabad Congress (1921), where he also presided over the Muslim League session and called for *Azadi-e-Kaamil*; later a founder member of the Communist Party of India.
- **Zakir Husain** (1897–1969): a founder member of the Jamia Millia Islamia; later India's third President (1967–69) and its first Muslim President; Bharat Ratna (1963).

◆ PRELIMS TRAP KHILAFAT FACTS THAT ARE OFTEN TWISTED

- The remark "**In this instance we could not play off the Mohammedans against the Hindus**" was made by Aitchison about the **Revolt of 1857** (Chapter 18), not about the Khilafat movement.
- The Khilafat movement aimed to preserve the Khalifa and the Ottoman Empire's hold on Muslim holy places; it did **not** seek separate electorates or social reform of Muslim society.
- The Khilafat was ended by the Turks themselves: **Mustafa Kemal** abolished the Sultanate in November 1922 and the Caliphate in **March 1924**.

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06 From Khilafat to Non-Cooperation (1920)

By mid-1920 the Punjab wrongs, the Khilafat wrongs and the disappointment of the 1919 reforms had come together, and every excuse for patience had run out. Gandhi now argued that British rule survived only because Indians cooperated with it; if they withdrew that cooperation, it would collapse within a year. The Khilafat Committee adopted his plan first, and the Congress followed.

How Was the Movement Launched?

- At **Allahabad** in June 1920, a meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee attended by Congress leaders accepted Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation in four stages: boycott of titles, of the civil services, of the police and army, and finally non-payment of taxes. It was to open with a hartal on 1 August.
- On 22 June 1920 Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy asserting the subject's ancient right to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules.
- The movement was formally launched on **1 August 1920**, the day **Tilak** died in Bombay; the launch merged with the mourning, and Gandhi returned his Kaiser-i-Hind medal and his South African war medals the same day.
- The **Khilafat Committee** formally began its own non-cooperation campaign on **31 August 1920**.
- In 1920 Gandhi also became president of the **All India Home Rule League**, which changed its name to **Swarajya Sabha**.

How Did the Congress Come Round?

- Many Congressmen with no experience of mass agitation feared that the programme would end in violence. Much of the old guard was opposed. Many Provincial Congress Committees accepted non-cooperation in principle but rejected the boycott of the new councils; **C. R. Das**, **Lala Lajpat Rai**, **Madan Mohan Malaviya**, **Annie Besant**, Jinnah and B. C. Pal were among the doubters. Newer areas such as Gujarat and Bihar backed Gandhi strongly.
- At a **special session at Calcutta** (September 1920), presided over by **Lala Lajpat Rai**, the Congress adopted non-cooperation by a large majority, helped by the support of Muslim delegates and business groups, until the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were righted and swaraj attained. Motilal Nehru, Jitendralal Banerjee, Kitchlew, Shaukat Ali, Dr Ansari and Yakub Hasan backed Gandhi; C. R. Das, Malaviya and Annie Besant opposed him.
- The elections to the new councils in **November 1920** were boycotted by Congress candidates and largely by voters too. In Madras the **Justice Party**, representing non-Brahmins, contested and formed the ministry.
- At the annual session at **Nagpur** (December 1920), presided over by **C. Vijayaraghavachariar**, the opposition melted away: **C. R. Das**, once a critic, moved the main resolution on non-cooperation.
- Gandhi promised "**Swaraj in one year**" if the programme was fully carried out. Leaders who still believed in strictly lawful methods, among them Jinnah, Annie Besant, G. S. Khaparde and B. C. Pal, left the Congress; the Moderates under Surendranath Banerjea had already broken away to form the **Indian**

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National Liberal Federation. Many revolutionary groups, especially in Bengal, pledged support to the new programme.

07 Nagpur 1920: A New Congress

Non-cooperation needed an organisation that could reach every village and act all year round. At Nagpur the Congress accepted a new constitution, largely Gandhi's work, that turned it from a body of annual meetings into a disciplined mass party. It also redefined what it was fighting for and how.

- The goal was changed from "attainment of self-government by constitutional and legal means" to "**attainment of swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means**", which committed the Congress to extra-constitutional mass action. Swaraj was to mean self-government within the Empire if possible and outside it if necessary.
- A **Congress Working Committee** of **15 members** was created to run the party through the year, a proposal Tilak had made in 1916; the All India Congress Committee had about 350 members.
- **Provincial Congress Committees** were reorganised on a **linguistic basis**, and committees were set up down to the district, taluka, village and mohalla level.
- Membership was opened to all men and women of 21 and above for an annual fee of **four annas**, so that the poor could join; the Congress was to use Hindi as far as possible.
- Resolutions were passed on Hindu–Muslim unity, the **removal of untouchability** and the promotion of khadi.

◆ PRELIMS FACT CONGRESS SESSIONS OF THE NON-COOPERATION YEARS

- **Amritsar, December 1919**: Motilal Nehru, after Jallianwala Bagh.
- **Calcutta (special), September 1920**: Lala Lajpat Rai; non-cooperation adopted.
- **Nagpur, December 1920**: C. Vijayaraghavachariar; new constitution; C. R. Das moved the resolution.
- **Ahmedabad, December 1921**: C. R. Das was president-elect but in jail, so Hakim Ajmal Khan acted as president; Gandhi was made the sole authority to run the movement.
- **Gaya, December 1922**: C. R. Das; the council-entry debate (Chapter 29).

08 The Programme: Boycott and Build

Gandhi's programme had two sides. One withdrew cooperation from the institutions through which Britain ruled; the other built Indian alternatives to them, so that boycott did not leave a vacuum. Escalation was built in: if swaraj did not come within a year, or if the government resorted to repression, the movement would move to its final stage, mass civil disobedience and the non-payment of taxes.

WITHDRAW (BOYCOTT)	BUILD (CONSTRUCTIVE)
Surrender of titles and honorary offices; resignation from nominated seats in local bodies	National schools and colleges

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WITHDRAW (BOYCOTT)	BUILD (CONSTRUCTIVE)
Refusal to attend government durbars and official functions	Panchayats and arbitration courts to settle disputes
Withdrawal of children from government schools and colleges	Swadeshi: spinning on the charkha and wearing khadi
Boycott of British law courts by lawyers and litigants	Hindu–Muslim unity
Refusal to enlist for service in Mesopotamia	Removal of untouchability
Boycott of elections to the councils	Strict non-violence, discipline and self-sacrifice
Boycott of foreign goods, especially cloth	A national fund (the Tilak Swaraj Fund) and a corps of volunteers
Final stage, if needed: resignation from government service, including the army and police, and mass civil disobedience with **non-payment of taxes**	

- The programme did not ask people to keep titles quietly; it asked them to **surrender** titles and honours. Gandhi returned his Kaiser-i-Hind medal, **Jamnalal Bajaj** gave up the title of Rai Bahadur, and **Hakim Ajmal Khan** gave up his title of Haziq-ul-Mulk.
- The emphasis on **non-violence** was non-negotiable: Gandhi's satyagraha aimed to change the heart of the opponent by the moral force of suffering, not to defeat him by force.

09 1921: The Movement at Its Height

The movement began in earnest in January 1921. Gandhi and the Ali brothers toured the country together, and different parts of the programme took the lead at different times: first education and the courts, then money and members, then cloth and the Prince of Wales. By the end of the year the government faced the most serious challenge since 1857.

January–March 1921: Schools and Courts



FACES OF THE KHILAFAT

The Ali brothers and the Jamia

- **Shaukat Ali** and his younger brother **Muhammad Ali Jauhar** were interned from 1915 to December 1919 for their pro-Turkish writings, and released just in time to lead the Khilafat agitation.
- For the Karachi resolution of July 1921 they were arrested in September and sentenced to two years in jail.
- Muhammad Ali, a founder of the Jamia Millia Islamia, presided over the Congress session at **Kakinada** (Cocanada) in 1923. He attended the First Round Table Conference, died in London on 4 January 1931, and was buried in Jerusalem.

Fig. 28.3 Jamia Millia Islamia, founded at Aligarh in October 1920 as a national university of the non-cooperation years, and moved to Delhi in 1925.

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- Nearly 90,000 students left government schools and colleges, and some 800 national schools and colleges were opened. The boycott was strongest in Bengal, where C. R. Das led it and **Subhas Chandra Bose** became principal of the National College in Calcutta, and in Punjab under Lajpat Rai.
- New national institutions included the **Jamia Millia Islamia** (Aligarh, October 1920, set up as a national Muslim university by students who found Aligarh Muslim University too pro-British; later moved to Delhi), the **Gujarat Vidyapith** (Ahmedabad, 1920), the **Kashi Vidyapith** (Varanasi, 1921) and the **Bihar Vidyapith** (Patna, 1921). Teachers in them included Zakir Husain, Acharya Narendra Dev and Lala Lajpat Rai.
- The boycott of courts was less complete but more dramatic: leading lawyers gave up lucrative practices, among them **C. R. Das**, **Motilal Nehru**, **M. R. Jayakar**, **Saifuddin Kitchlew**, **Vallabhbhai Patel**, **C. Rajagopalachari**, **T. Prakasam**, **Asaf Ali**, **Rajendra Prasad** and **Jawaharlal Nehru**.

April–June 1921: Members, Money and Charkhas

At **Bezwada** (Vijayawada) in March–April 1921, the All India Congress Committee set targets to be met by 30 June: one crore members, one crore rupees for the **Tilak Swaraj Fund**, and twenty lakh charkhas. The fund was oversubscribed, but Congress membership reached only about 50 lakh, and spinning too fell short of its target, though the charkha now spread into homes across India.

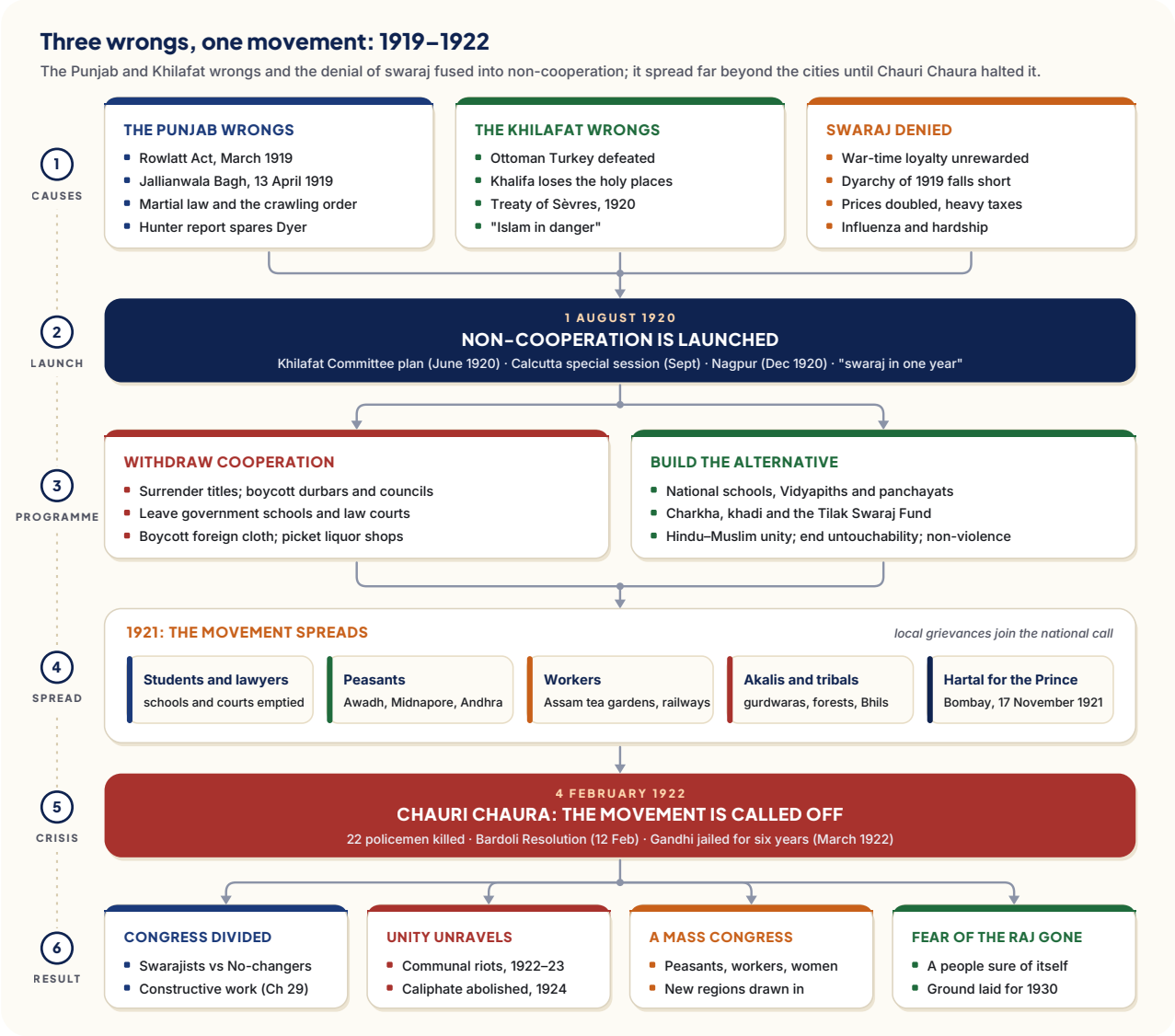


Fig. 28.4 Three wrongs, one movement: how the Punjab and Khilafat grievances and the demand for swaraj became non-cooperation, and how it ended.

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July 1921 Onwards: Cloth, Liquor and the Prince

- The boycott of foreign cloth was the most successful item: volunteers collected foreign cloth from door to door and burnt it in huge bonfires, and imports of foreign cloth fell from ₹102 crore in 1920–21 to ₹57 crore in 1921–22. Merchants who refused to deal in foreign goods helped, and Indian mill and handloom production rose. **Tagore** criticised the burning of cloth as wasteful.
- **Picketing of liquor and toddy shops**, not part of the original programme, became very popular; the Bihar and Orissa government even published a list of great men of history who drank, to push sales.
- **Khadi** became the uniform of the national movement. In September 1921, at Madurai, Gandhi adopted the loincloth, the dress of the poorest Indians, which he wore for the rest of his life.
- In July 1921 the Khilafat conference at Karachi declared it unlawful for Muslims to serve in the British Indian army. The **Ali brothers** were arrested in September for this; the resolution was then repeated at meetings across India, and Gandhi himself urged Indians to sever ties with the government.
- The **Prince of Wales** landed at Bombay on **17 November** 1921 to a nationwide hartal and empty streets. In Bombay, the crowd returning from Gandhi's bonfire of foreign cloth clashed with people returning from the welcome; in three days of rioting, the movement's first violent outbreak, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Parsis seen as loyalists were attacked, and about 59 people died. Gandhi, deeply disturbed, fasted for three days to restore peace.
- The Congress now allowed local Congress committees to begin civil disobedience wherever they judged the people ready; no-tax campaigns against union board taxes were already under way in **Midnapore** (Bengal) and **Guntur** (Andhra).
- Congress and Khilafat **volunteer corps** drilled openly and in places acted almost as a parallel police; courting arrest ("jail bharo") became a mark of honour.

10 Many Movements in One

Non-cooperation spread far beyond the Congress's old strongholds, but it rarely spread as Gandhi planned it. Everywhere local people read the call in the light of their own grievances against landlords, planters, forest officials or mahants. Where they were already organised, the movement was strongest; where its leaders lost control, it turned violent. Swaraj was never precisely defined, so each group could imagine its own.

Who Took Part?

- **Middle classes:** they gave the early leadership but had reservations; response in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, the old centres of elite politics, was limited, and few gave up titles or government jobs.
- **Business:** big industrialists kept away, fearing labour unrest and opposing a total boycott of foreign goods; ordinary traders and the textile industry, which gained from swadeshi, supported the economic boycott.
- **Women and students:** women picketed cloth and liquor shops, gave up purdah and donated jewellery to the Tilak Fund; students left government institutions in thousands and served as volunteers.
- **Newcomers:** leaders such as **Rajendra Prasad** in Bihar and **Vallabhbhai Patel** in Gujarat rose with the movement, finding in non-cooperation a workable alternative to terrorism.

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- **Muslims:** their participation was massive; in many places two-thirds of those arrested were Muslims, and Gandhi and other leaders addressed Muslim audiences from mosques, Gandhi even speaking to meetings of Muslim women.
- **Peasants and workers:** their massive participation was the most remarkable feature of the movement and made it a true mass movement. Peasants were most effective where they had already organised themselves, as in the Kisan Sabhas of Awadh active since 1918; workers struck in Madras, Bengal and Assam, and traders joined in Bombay and Bengal.

Many movements in one, 1919–22

Where the Rowlatt protests, the Congress and Khilafat milestones and the local struggles of non-cooperation took place. Modern boundaries for reference only.



Fig. 28.5 The many fronts of non-cooperation, 1919–22: how local struggles joined the national movement.

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Where Did Local Struggles Join In?

REGION	LOCAL STRUGGLE	LEADERS AND FEATURES
Awadh (UP)	Kisan Sabha movement against taluqdars	UP Kisan Sabha (1918, Gauri Shankar Misra and Indra Narain Dwivedi, backed by Madan Mohan Malaviya); Baba Ramchandra; Awadh Kisan Sabha (1920); demands: no begar, no illegal cesses, no eviction; riots in Rae Bareli, Pratapgarh, Faizabad, Sultanpur
North-west Awadh	Eka (unity) movement, late 1921–22	Madari Pasi; against high rents and their collection in kind; spread to Hardoi, Bahraich, Sitapur
Bihar	Caste and peasant tensions	A conflict between lower and upper castes over the lower castes' right to wear the sacred thread merged with the movement; peasants turned against landlords and traders
Bengal	No-tax campaign; strikes	Midnapore no-tax campaign under Birendranath Sasmal; Assam–Bengal railway strike, led by J. M. Sengupta
Assam	Tea-garden labourers' strikes and exodus	Workers left the plantations shouting "Gandhi Maharaj ki jai"; Gurkha police attacked them at Chandpur (May 1921); strikes spread to steamer services
Andhra	No-tax and forest satyagrahas	Chirala–Perala (Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya); Pedanandipadu no-tax; defiance of forest laws in Guntur and Cuddapah; Alluri Sitarama Raju's Rampa rising (1922–24)
Punjab	Akali (Gurdwara Reform) movement, 1920–25	Against corrupt mahants; Nankana Sahib massacre (February 1921); "keys affair"; non-violent methods
Malabar (Kerala)	Mappila (Moplah) rising, August 1921	Muslim tenants against mostly Hindu landlords and the state; turned communal; harshly crushed under martial law
Rajasthan	Peasant and tribal movements	Bijolia (Mewar) against cesses and begar; Bhil movement of Motilal Tejawat
Odisha	Refusal of illegal cesses	Tenants of Kanika estate refused to pay abwabs
Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madras	Weaker response	Tilak's followers were cool to Gandhi; at Malegaon (Nasik) a few policemen were burnt to death after local leaders were arrested

◆ PRELIMS TRAP EKA IS NOT BARDOLI

- The **Eka movement** (1921–22) was a peasant protest in **Awadh** (Hardoi, Bahraich, Sitapur) against **excessive rents** and their collection; it was led by **Madari Pasi** and other low-caste leaders, and it drifted away from Congress control.
- The **Bardoli Satyagraha** (1928) in **Surat district, Gujarat** (not Saurashtra) was a no-revenue campaign against an **enhancement of land revenue**, led by Vallabhbhai Patel (Chapter 30).
- Do not confuse either with the **Bardoli Resolution** of February 1922, which suspended non-cooperation (Section 11).

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CONNECTING THE DOTS FROM THE AKALI AGITATION TO THE SGPC

- Sikh reformers (societies such as the Central Majha Khalsa Diwan) demand control of gurdwaras from hereditary mahants; the Golden Temple clergy's honouring of Dyer adds fuel (1919–20)
- Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and Akali Dal formed (1920)
- Non-violent jathas, Nankana Sahib massacre (1921), "keys affair" won (1922)
- Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925: the SGPC becomes the statutory manager of gurdwaras

11 Repression, Bardoli and Chauri Chaura

At first the government held back, believing that repression would only make martyrs. When that failed, it tried to divide the movement, then turned to force. Gandhi, under pressure to begin the final stage of civil disobedience, chose a single taluka for the test. Before it could begin, a village in eastern UP changed everything.

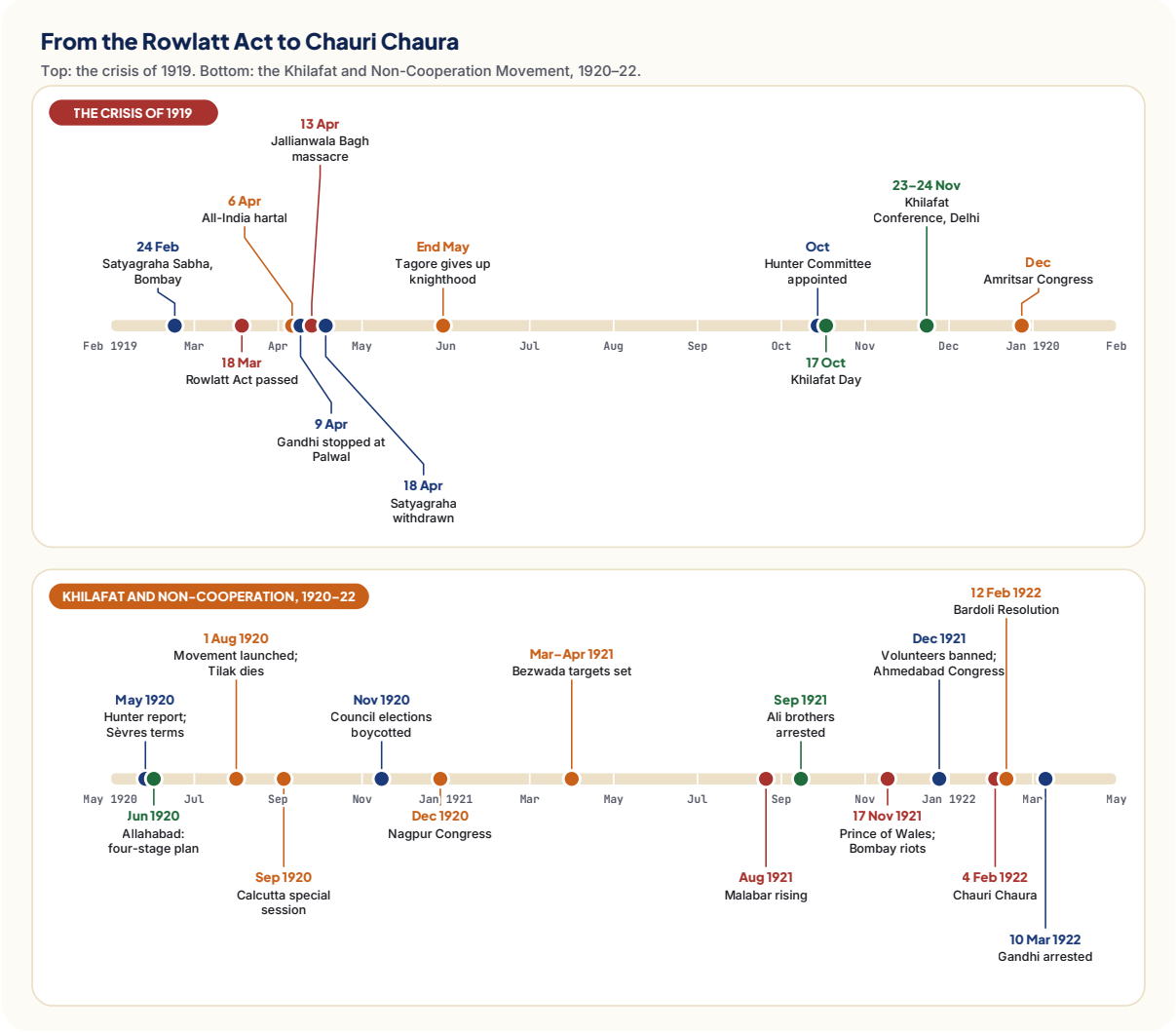


Fig. 28.6 From the Rowlatt Act to the end of the Khilafat, 1919–24.

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How Did the Government Respond?

- In May 1921 the Viceroy, **Lord Reading**, met Gandhi and tried to drive a wedge between him and the Khilafat leaders by persuading him to ask the Ali brothers to withdraw speeches that hinted at violence; the talks achieved little.
- From December 1921 the government struck: the Congress and Khilafat volunteer corps were declared illegal, meetings were banned, newspapers gagged and offices raided, and some 30,000 people were jailed; by the end of 1921 almost every leader except Gandhi was in prison.
- A mediation attempt by Madan Mohan Malaviya in December failed. The Ahmedabad Congress (December 1921) made Gandhi the sole authority to direct the movement. There, Hasrat Mohani proposed complete independence as the Congress goal, and Gandhi opposed it.

Why Did Chauri Chaura Stop the Movement?

- On **1 February 1922** Gandhi sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy: unless political prisoners were freed and repression ended, mass civil disobedience, including a no-tax campaign, would begin in **Bardoli** taluka of Surat district.
- On **4 February 1922**, at **Chauri Chaura** in **Gorakhpur** district (UP), police fired on a procession of volunteers; the angry crowd drove the policemen into their station and set it on fire, killing 22 policemen. The police had earlier beaten a volunteer leader who was picketing against liquor sales and high food prices.
- Gandhi saw the violence as proof that the people were not yet trained in non-violence, and that the movement was drifting from its moorings. He undertook a five-day fast as penance, and wrote in *Young India* (16 February 1922) that he would suffer every humiliation, even death, to keep the movement from becoming violent.
- Meeting at Bardoli on **12 February 1922**, the Congress Working Committee passed the **Bardoli Resolution**: it suspended civil disobedience, asked peasants to pay taxes and tenants their rents, and stressed constructive work before any further political agitation. In some localities the movement continued for a time despite the withdrawal.
- **Madan Mohan Malaviya** defended the Chauri Chaura accused in the Allahabad High Court; of 172 people the sessions court had sentenced to death, 19 were finally hanged (1923).

How Did the Leaders React?

- Most leaders were stunned. **Motilal Nehru**, **C. R. Das** and **Lajpat Rai** protested from jail; **Subhas Chandra Bose** later called the withdrawal a "national calamity"; **Jawaharlal Nehru** recorded his "amazement and consternation".
- At the AICC meeting in Delhi later that month, **B. S. Moonje** moved a vote of censure against Gandhi, which failed.
- Gandhi was arrested on **10 March 1922** and tried at Ahmedabad before Judge C. N. Broomfield for sedition under **Section 124A**; pleading guilty, he invited "the highest penalty" for what was in law a crime but to him "the highest duty of a citizen", and was sentenced to **six years**, the sentence Tilak had received under the same section. He was held in Yerawada jail, Poona, and released on health grounds on 5 February 1924.

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How Did the Khilafat End?

The Khilafat issue disappeared in Turkey itself. Under **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**, the Turks abolished the Sultanate (November 1922), declared a republic and abolished the Caliphate (March 1924); Turkey became a secular state with a European-style legal system, wide rights for women, national education and modern agriculture and industry. With its symbol gone, the Khilafat movement collapsed, and the unity it had produced soon gave way to communal riots in 1922–23 (Chapter 35).

CONNECTING THE DOTS SEDITION: FROM TILAK AND GANDHI TO THE PRESENT

- Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (1870) defines "sedition" as exciting disaffection against the government
- Tilak convicted under it (1897, 1908); Gandhi sentenced to six years under it in 1922
- 2022: the Supreme Court puts the use of Section 124A on hold
- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, in force from 1 July 2024, drops "sedition" but its Section 152 punishes acts endangering India's sovereignty, unity and integrity

12 Why Withdraw? Assessing the Movement

Gandhi's withdrawal has been debated ever since. His critics saw a leader who halted a nation on the verge of victory because of one village; his defenders saw a strategist who stopped a movement that was losing discipline and strength before repression could crush it. The record supports parts of both views.

Why Did Gandhi Call It Off?

- Chauri Chaura showed that the people were not yet trained in non-violence, and Gandhi feared that continuing would bring chaos, give the government the excuse for crushing repression, and destroy the very principle on which non-cooperation rested.
- In places the movement was turning into a no-rent campaign against zamindars, a class war that Gandhi, who wanted all classes united against the Raj, did not intend.
- Marxist historians offer another reading: the leadership, they argue, took over a growing mass upsurge to keep it within safe channels, and called it off just when the masses were taking the initiative.
- By late 1921 the movement was already ebbing: students were drifting back to schools, lawyers to courts, and traders were weary of unsold stocks. A mass movement cannot be sustained indefinitely; a pause would allow the people to recover their strength for the next round.

What Did It Fail to Do?

- It won neither swaraj within a year nor the restoration of the Khalifa, and it was called off abruptly.
- Its success varied by region and depended more on local issues than on Congress organisation; middle-class participation was modest. Since neither Gandhi nor the Congress defined swaraj, the movement carried many different visions of freedom.

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- National schools and arbitration courts were too few and too slow to replace government ones, so many students and lawyers returned. Khadi cost 30–40 per cent more than mill cloth, beyond the reach of many poor people.
- Big industrialists opposed it, and the leaders' dependence on capitalists limited the mobilisation of workers. The masses often crossed the limits of non-violence, and the anti-untouchability programme remained secondary.
- Except in Malabar, Hindu–Muslim unity held during the movement (Shraddhanand preached from the Jama Masjid and Kitchlew was handed the keys of the Golden Temple), but it rested on a religious symbol and did not survive the movement's collapse.

What Did It Achieve?

- It was the **first nationwide mass movement** against colonial rule, drawing in peasants, workers, tribals, women, artisans and even, in places, untouchables, and reaching regions that had never taken part before.
- Peasant and working-class participation was more impressive than that of the urban middle class, and the boycott of foreign cloth and the anti-liquor campaign succeeded in most parts of the country.
- The Congress became a true mass party with a disciplined organisation; Lord Dufferin's old charge that it represented only a "microscopic minority" could not be made again.
- The economic boycott was more successful than the swadeshi boycott of 1905–08, and the charkha and khadi became lasting symbols of self-reliance; national education took root.
- Above all, it removed the fear of the Raj from millions of Indians and gave them confidence in their own power. It broke the two myths on which colonial rule rested: that it served Indians' interests, and that it was invincible.
- Gandhi called the fight begun in 1920 "a fight to the finish": the strategy of struggle followed by pause and constructive work, then struggle again, would shape the next two decades (Chapters 29–33).

How Did the Two Campaigns Compare?

POINT	ROWLATT SATYAGRAHA (1919)	NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT (1920–22)
Issue	A single law: the Rowlatt Act	Three wrongs: Punjab, Khilafat and swaraj
Organisation	Satyagraha Sabha and Home Rule League cadres; the Congress hardly involved	The Congress with a new constitution, and the Khilafat Committee
Methods	Hartal, fasting, prayer, breaking press laws	Boycott of titles, schools, courts, councils and foreign cloth; constructive work
Reach	Mainly cities; Punjab, Delhi, Bombay, Ahmedabad	All-India; peasants, workers, tribals, women and traders
Hindu–Muslim unity	Striking (Delhi, Amritsar)	At its peak, through the Khilafat; broke down in Malabar
How it ended	Withdrawn on 18 April 1919 after violence	Suspended by the Bardoli Resolution after Chauri Chaura

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POINT	ROWLATT SATYAGRAHA (1919)	NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT (1920–22)
Result	Act not repealed until 1922; Gandhi a national leader	No swaraj; but a mass Congress and fear of the Raj gone

CONNECTING THE DOTS FROM NON-COOPERATION TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

- 1920–22: non-cooperation withdraws cooperation; civil disobedience is held back as the final stage
- 1922: Bardoli Resolution; the Congress splits into Swarajists and No-changers (Chapter 29)
- 1922–29: constructive work in khadi, national schools and village service prepares cadres
- 1930: the deferred final stage arrives as the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Salt March (Chapter 31)

13 The Big Picture

In three years Indian politics changed its character. Jallianwala Bagh destroyed the moral claim of British rule even for loyal Indians such as Gandhi; the Khilafat brought Muslims into anti-British politics in large numbers; and non-cooperation made the Congress a mass organisation. It failed in its stated aims but changed the balance between ruler and ruled.

- **Continuity:** boycott and swadeshi carried forward the methods of 1905 (Chapter 24), and peasant and tribal grievances that had simmered since the nineteenth century (Chapter 19) found a national outlet.
- **Change and limits:** mass, non-violent, all-India struggle under one leader replaced elite petitioning, though religious symbols left a fragile unity and local movements often slipped out of Congress control.
- **Legacy:** the pattern of struggle and truce, the constructive programme, khadi and national education, and the Congress's mass base carried through to 1947.
- **For a Mains answer:** explain the convergence of three grievances; describe the programme and its spread with regional examples; weigh the withdrawal; and assess the movement as the start of mass nationalism.

✦ Prelims Quick Revision

- **Rowlatt Act**: Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, March 1919; Sedition Committee (Justice Sidney Rowlatt); detention without trial; 'no vakil, no daleel, no appeal'; repealed 1922.
- **Rowlatt Satyagraha**: Satyagraha Sabha, Bombay (24 Feb 1919); hartal 6 April; Gandhi stopped at Palwal (9 April); withdrawn 18 April, a 'Himalayan miscalculation'.
- **Jallianwala Bagh**: 13 April 1919 (Baisakhi); General Dyer; 379 dead officially; Tagore gave up knighthood; Sankaran Nair resigned; Montagu: 'preventive murder'.
- **Hunter Committee** (Oct 1919): Indian minority report; Congress inquiry report drafted by Gandhi; Amritsar Congress 1919 under Motilal Nehru.

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- **Khilafat**: Khilafat Committee, Bombay (March 1919); Khilafat Day 17 Oct 1919; Delhi conference Nov 1919 presided by Gandhi; Treaty of Sèvres (1920).
- **NCM launch**: Allahabad plan (June 1920); launched 1 August 1920, the day Tilak died; Calcutta special session (Sept 1920, Lajpat Rai).
- **Nagpur 1920**: C. Vijayaraghavachariar; C. R. Das moved resolution; swaraj by 'peaceful and legitimate means'; CWC of 15; linguistic PCCs; 4-anna fee.
- **Titles given up**: Gandhi (Kaiser-i-Hind), Jamnalal Bajaj (Rai Bahadur), Hakim Ajmal Khan (Haziq-ul-Mulk); Swarajya Sabha was the renamed All India Home Rule League.
- **1921**: Bezwada targets (1 crore members, ₹1 crore Tilak Swaraj Fund, 20 lakh charkhas); foreign cloth imports ₹102 cr → ₹57 cr; Prince of Wales, 17 Nov.
- **Chauri Chaura**: Gorakhpur, 4 Feb 1922, 22 policemen killed; Bardoli Resolution 12 Feb; Gandhi jailed six years under Section 124A; Caliphate abolished March 1924.

Previous Year Questions

Prelims

2026 Which one of the following statements about the Eka Movement and Bardoli Satyagraha is correct?

a. The Eka Movement was throughout supported and organized by the Congress while Bardoli Satyagraha was initially independent of Congress influence and was only in the last stages supported by the Congress.

b. The Eka Movement was provided leadership by the taluqdars of Awadh, whereas the Bardoli Satyagraha was a movement of the landless labourers.

c. The Bardoli Satyagraha was a campaign against the enhancement of land revenue, while the Eka Movement was a protest against excessive extraction of rents.

d. The Eka Movement was located in the Varanasi and Mirzapur districts of the present-day U.P., while the Bardoli Satyagraha took place in Saurashtra.

Answer: (c). Eka was a tenants' protest against excessive rents in north-west Awadh, led by Madari Pasi and drifting away from the Congress; Bardoli (Surat district, 1928) opposed a revenue enhancement (Section 10). (PROVISIONAL KEY)

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2025 Consider the following subjects with regard to Non-Cooperation Programme:
I. Boycott of law-courts and foreign cloth
II. Observance of strict non-violence
III. Retention of titles and honours without using them in public
IV. Establishment of Panchayats for settling disputes
How many of the above were parts of the Non-Cooperation Programme?

a Only one | b Only two | c Only three | d All the four

Answer: (c). The programme asked people to surrender titles, not keep them; boycott, non-violence and panchayats were all part of it (Section 08).

2025 Consider the following statements in respect of the Non-Cooperation Movement:
I. The Congress declared the attainment of 'Swaraj' by all legitimate and peaceful means to be its objective.
II. It was to be implemented in stages with civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes for the next stage only if 'Swaraj' did not come within a year and the Government resorted to repression.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a I only | b II only | c Both I and II | d Neither I nor II

Answer: (c). Nagpur changed the goal to swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means, and civil disobedience with non-payment of taxes was held back as the final stage (Sections 07 and 08).

2025 Who provided legal defence to the people arrested in the aftermath of Chauri Chaura incident?

a C. R. Das
b Madan Mohan Malaviya and Krishna Kant
c Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Khwaja Hasan Nizami
d M. A. Jinnah

Answer: (b). Madan Mohan Malaviya, assisted by Krishna Kant Malaviya, argued the appeal in the Allahabad High Court; 19 of the 172 condemned were finally hanged (Section 11).

2018 In 1920, which of the following changed its name to "Swarajya Sabha"?

a All India Home Rule League | b Hindu Mahasabha
c South Indian Liberal Federation | d The Servants of India Society

Answer: (a). Gandhi became president of the All India Home Rule League in 1920 and it was renamed Swarajya Sabha (Section 06).

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2015 With reference to Rowlatt Satyagraha, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Rowlatt Act was based on the recommendations of the 'Sedition Committee'.
2. In Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhiji tried to Utilize the Home Rule League.
3. Demonstrations against the arrival of Simon Commission coincided with Rowlatt Satyagraha.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

a 1 only | **b 1 and 2 only** | c 2 and 3 only | d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b). The Act came from the Sedition Committee and Gandhi used the Home Rule Leagues' cadre; the Simon Commission arrived only in 1928 (Sections 02 and 03).

2012 The Rowlatt Act aimed at

a compulsory economic support to war efforts

b imprisonment without trial and summary procedures for trial

c suppression of the Khilafat Movement

d imposition of restrictions on freedom of the press

Answer: (b). Its core was detention without trial and summary trials by special benches with no appeal (Section 02).

2008 Who was the Viceroy of India when the Rowlatt Act was passed?

a Lord Irwin | b Lord Reading | **c Lord Chelmsford** | d Lord Wavell

Answer: (c). Lord Chelmsford (1916–21) was Viceroy when the Rowlatt Act was pushed through in March 1919 (Section 02).

2007 Which one of the following aroused a wave of popular indignation that led to the massacre by the British at Jallianwala Bagh?

a The Arms Act | b The Public Safety Act

c The Rowlatt Act | d The Vernacular Press Act

Answer: (c). The agitation against the Rowlatt Act, and the arrest of Kitchlew and Satyapal, led to the gathering of 13 April 1919 (Sections 02–04).

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2004 During the Indian Freedom Struggle, who among the following proposed that Swaraj should be defined as complete independence free from all foreign control?

a Mazharul Haque
b Maulana Hasrat Mohani
c Hakim Ajmal Khan
d Abul Kalam Azad

Answer: (b). Hasrat Mohani moved the demand for complete independence (Azadi-e-Kaamil) at the Ahmedabad Congress of 1921; Gandhi opposed it (Section 05).

2004 The name of the famous person of India who returned the Knighthood conferred on him by the British Government as a token of protest against the atrocities in Punjab in 1919 was:

a Tej Bahadur Sapru
b Ashutosh Mukherjee
c Rabindra Nath Tagore
d Syed Ahmad Khan

Answer: (c). Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest against the Punjab atrocities (Section 04).

2003 Assertion (A) : In 1916, Mualana Mohammad Ali and Abul Kalam Azad resigned from the Legislative Council.
Reason (R) : The Rowlatt Act was passed by the government in spite of being opposed by all Indian members of the Legislative Council.

a Both A and R are individually true and R is the correct explanation of A
b Both A and R are individually true but R is NOT the correct explanation of A
c A is true but R is false
d A is false but R is true

Answer: (d). The assertion is false: it was in 1919 that Jinnah, Malaviya and Mazharul Haque resigned; the reason is true, as every elected Indian member voted against the Rowlatt Bill (Section 02).

2001 Who among the following leaders proposed to adopt Complete Independence as the goal of the Congress in the Ahmedabad session of 1920 ?

a Abul Kalam Azad
b Hasrat Mohani
c Jawaharlal Nehru
d Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Answer: (b). It was Hasrat Mohani who moved the complete-independence resolution at the Ahmedabad session (December 1921) (Section 05).

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2001 The Hunter Commission was appointed after the

- a Black hole incident
- b Jalianwallabagh massacre
- c Uprising of 1857
- d Partition of Bengal

Answer: (b). The Hunter Committee was appointed in October 1919 to inquire into the Punjab disturbances and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (Section 04).

1999 The first venture of Gandhi in all-India politics was the

- a Non-Cooperation Movement
- b Rowlatt Satyagraha
- c Champaran Movement
- d Dandi March

Answer: (b). The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919 was Gandhi's first all-India campaign; Champaran was a local struggle (Section 03).

1998 Assertion (A) : Gandhi stopped the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1922.
Reason (R) : Violence at Chauri-Chaura led him to stop the movement.

- a Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- b Both A and R are true, but R is NOT a correct explanation of A
- c A is true, but R is false
- d A is false, but R is true

Answer: (a). After the violence at Chauri Chaura (4 February 1922) Gandhi withdrew the movement through the Bardoli Resolution (Section 11).

1998 Assertion (A) : The Khilafat movement did bring the urban Muslims into the fold of the National Movement.
Reason (R) : There was a predominant element of anti-imperialism in both the National and Khilafat Movements.

- a Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A
- b Both A and R are true, but R is NOT a correct explanation of A
- c A is true, but R is false
- d A is false, but R is true

Answer: (a). The shared anti-imperialism of the Khilafat and national movements brought large numbers of Muslims into anti-British politics (Sections 05 and 13).

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1998 Which one of the following events, was characterised by Montague as 'Preventive Murder' ?

a Killing of INA activists
b Massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh
c Shooting of the Mahatma
d Shooting of Curzon-Wythe

Answer: (b). Edwin Montagu called Dyer's firing at Jallianwala Bagh 'preventive murder' (Section 04).

1996 The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crime Act (1919) was popularly known as the

a Rowlatt Act
b Pitt's India Act
c Indian Arms Act
d Ilbert Bill

Answer: (a). The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919 was popularly called the Rowlatt Act (Section 02).

1996 Consider the following statements : The Non-Cooperation Movement led to the
I. Congress becoming a mass movement for the first time. II. growth of Hindu-Muslim unity. III. removal of fear of the British 'might' from the minds of the people.
IV. British government's willingness to grant political concessions to Indians. Of these statements

a I, II, III and IV are correct
b II and III are correct
c I and III are correct
d III and IV are correct

Answer: (c). Non-cooperation made the Congress a mass movement and freed people from fear of British might; the unity it created proved short-lived and the government made no concessions (Section 12).

Mains

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