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Rebels and the Raj 1857 Revolt and Its Representations

The Revolt of 1857, also known as the First War of Independence, was a major uprising against British colonial rule in India. It began as a mutiny against economic exploitation, social and religious grievances, and rumors that offended religious sentiments.

The revolt was marked by diverse motivations among different groups. Sepoys were dissatisfied with low wages, leave cancellations, and the British in the Awadh, and the breakdown of traditional social orders.

The rebellion had significant consequences, including administrative changes by the British, shifts in policies, and the eventual end of the Mughal Empire. Artistic and literary works have kept alive the memory of the revolt, highlighting the heroism of leaders like Rani Lakshmi Bai.

The revolt began on 10 May 1857 in the Meerut cantonment when sepoys mutinied.

The mutiny quickly spread from the native infantry to the cavalry and the city.

Rebels captured the bell of arms (weapon store), attacked white people, and destroyed/plundered government buildings like the record office, jail, court, post office, and treasury.

The Mutiny Begins

The revolt began in Meerut, with soldiers refusing to use cartridges suspected of being greased with cow and pig fat.

It spread rapidly across northern and central India, involving soldiers, peasants, and zamindars.

Local leadership emerged, such as Rani Lakshmbai in Jhansi and Nana Sahib in Kanpur, uniting people against British rule.

Communication networks like messengers and rumors played a key role in spreading the rebellion.



Pattern of the Uprising

Rebels demanded the restoration of traditional rulers, such as reinstating the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.

They sought to protect traditional social hierarchies and religious practices threatened by British reforms.

Economic grievances, including land revenue systems, sparked a demand for justice and relief.

Examples of proclamations from rebels highlighted opposition to the British disregard for Indian customs and traditions.

What the Rebels Wanted

Exam Question

Q: What were the immediate and long-term causes of the Revolt of 1857?

A: Immediate causes included the introduction of the Enfield rifle cartridges rumored to be greased with cow and pig fat, offending religious widespread dissatisfaction among peasants, landlords, and soldiers.

Pattern of the Rebellion

The rebellion started with the mutiny of sepoy in Meerut on 10 May 1857 and quickly spread to Delhi, where the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II called on Hindus and Muslims to unite against the British.

Ordinary people, including peasants and townsfolk, joined the revolt. The sepoy maintained communication across cantonments, spreading and corruption of caste and religion by the British.

The British annexation policies, such as the Subsidiary Alliance and the Summary Settlement in Awadh, dispossessed taluqdars and disrupted

Exam Question

Q: How did the rebellion spread after the initial mutiny in Meerut?

A: After the mutiny in Meerut, the sepoy marched to Delhi and declared Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leader. The revolt spread to the Gangetic

What the Rebels Wanted

The rebels aimed to restore traditional rulers and protect social and religious customs. They condemned British annexations and policies that disrupted social resistance.

The proclamations appealed to both Hindus and Muslims, showing unity against British rule despite British attempts to create religious divisions and social disruption.

Exam Question

Q: What were the main demands and goals of the rebels during the 1857 revolt?

A: The rebels wanted to restore traditional rulers, protect social and religious customs, and reverse British annexations and policies that disrupted

Images of the Revolt

Records from the rebels' perspective are limited, but British accounts include letters, diaries, and official reports. Visual representations such as

Notable paintings like "Relief of Lucknow" and "In Memoriam" depicted British suffering and heroism. Indian nationalist movements later celebrated

Exam Question

Q: How did British and Indian representations of the 1857 revolt differ?

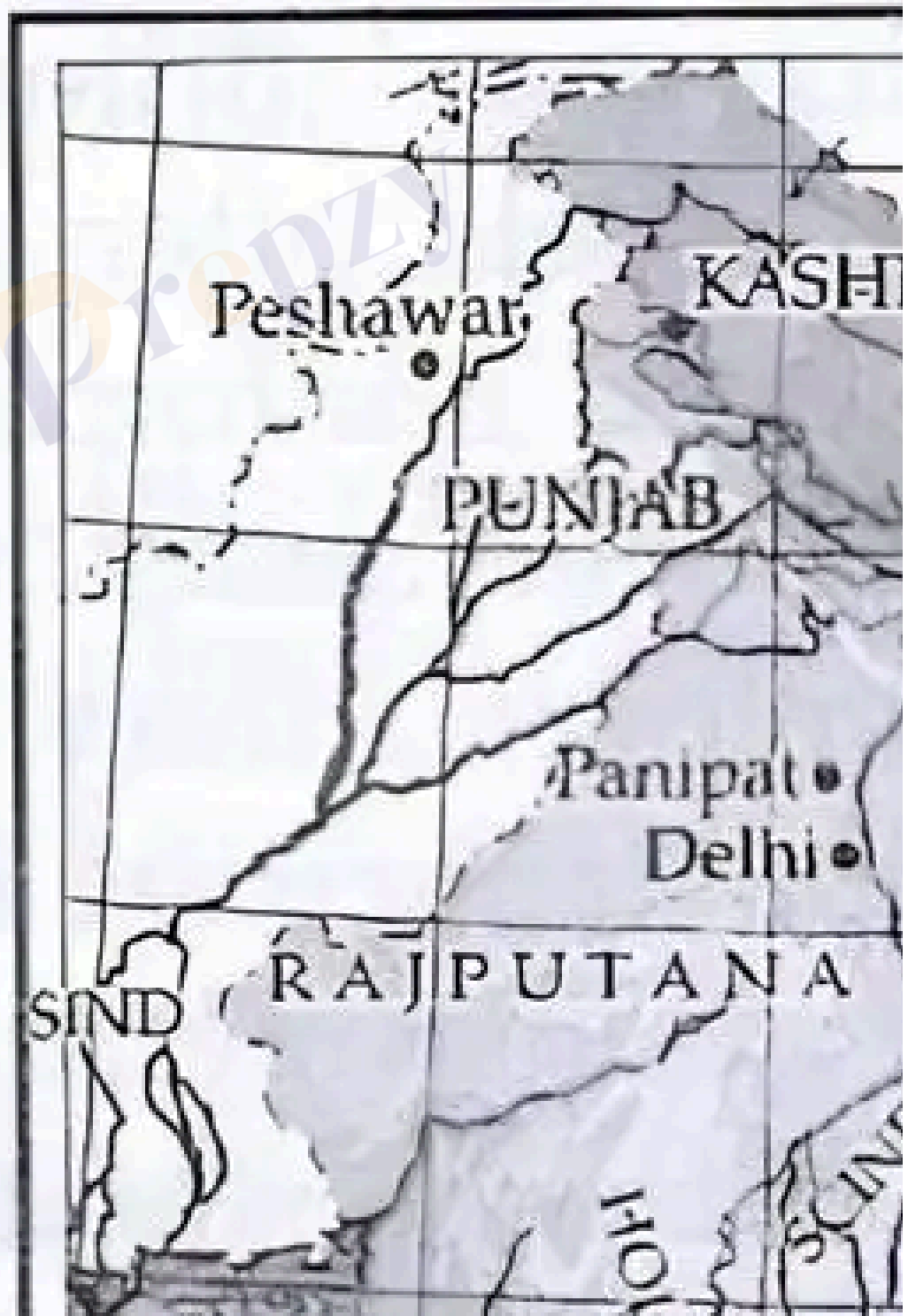
A: British representations often depicted the revolt as a violent mutiny requiring harsh repression, highlighting British heroism and suffering. I

Key Dates of the Revolt

Year	Event
1801	Subsidiary Alliance introduced by Wellesley in Awadh
1856	Nawab Wajid Ali Shah deposed; Awadh annexed
1856-57	Summary revenue settlements introduced in Awadh
10 May 1857	Mutiny starts in Meerut
11-12 May 1857	Delhi garrison's revolt; Bahadur Shah accepts leadership
May-June 1857	Mutiny turns into a general revolt of the people
30 June 1857	British suffer defeat in the battle of Chinhat
25 Sept 1857	British forces enter the Residency in Lucknow
June 1858	Rani Lakshmibai killed in battle

Key Maps

Territories or cities w





GUJARAT

Surat

Aurangabad

Bombay

Poona

Hyderabad

GOA

MYSORE

COORG

MYSORE

COCHIN M

Solved Examples

Example 1: Explain the role of rumors in the spread of the 1857 revolt.

Answer: Rumors played a significant role in mobilizing people during the revolt. For example, the rumor that the British had greased rifle cartridges with cow and pig fat, which increased distrust and motivated more people to join the uprising.

Example 2: Describe the impact of British land revenue policies on the revolt.

Answer: British land revenue policies, such as the Summary Settlement in Awadh, dispossessed taluqdars and disrupted traditional social order.

Practice Set

Easy

- When and where did the Revolt of 1857 begin?
- Who was declared the leader of the revolt in Delhi?

Moderate

- What were the main causes of the 1857 revolt?
- Explain the role of Rani Lakshmibai in the revolt.

Challenging

- Analyze the impact of British annexation policies on the social structure of Awadh.
- Discuss how the revolt of 1857 influenced the Indian National Movement.

Answer Key

Easy

- The Revolt of 1857 began on 10 May 1857 in Meerut.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar was declared the leader of the revolt in Delhi.

Moderate

- Main causes included political annexations, economic exploitation, social and religious grievances, and immediate triggers like the greased cartridge.
- Rani Lakshmibai was a key leader who fought bravely against the British and became a symbol of resistance.

Challenging

- British annexation policies dispossessed traditional rulers and taluqdars, breaking down social orders and causing economic hardship,
- The revolt inspired later nationalist movements by highlighting the possibility of united resistance against British rule and became known as the Revolt of 1857.

Quick Reference

- **Mutiny:** A rebellion against authority, especially by soldiers.
- **Bell of arms:** Store room where weapons were kept.
- **Firangi:** Term used to designate foreigners, often derogatory.
- **Emissaries:** Persons sent on special diplomatic missions.
- **Enfield Rifle:** Rifle introduced in 1857 with cartridges rumored to offend religious beliefs.
- **Subsidiary Alliance:** British strategy to control Indian states indirectly.
- **Annexation:** Formal act of acquiring territory.

Glossary

Mutiny	A rebellion against authority, especially by soldiers.
Bell of arms	A store room where weapons are kept.
Firangi	A term used to designate foreigners, often derogatory.
Emissaries	Persons sent as diplomatic representatives on special missions.
Enfield Rifle	A rifle introduced in 1857, with cartridges rumored to be greased with cow and pig fat, offending religious sentiments.
Subsidiary Alliance	A British strategy to establish indirect control over Indian states by forcing rulers to accept British military presence.
Annexation	The formal act of acquiring sovereignty over territory outside one's domain.