

Role of Indians in the Battle of 1857

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ABSTRACT

The 1857 war was a watershed moment in the history of the Indian subcontinent. The battle has sparked academic debate among historians and sociologists all around the world. Despite the fact that it has been more than 150 years, this battle continues to pique the interest of historians. The war's causes and events that occurred throughout the conflict, persons who backed the British and anti-British fighters, and the results and ramifications, are all aspects of this conflict. In terms of outcomes, many academics believe that the war was a failure for those who started it. It is often assumed that the Indians who battled the British in this conflict were unable to achieve their goals. Many gains accrued to Indians as a result of the conflict, but these achievements are overshadowed by the dispute over the war's failure. This research effort focuses on the war's achievements for India, and the significance of those achievements.

Keywords: leadership, legal status, battle, accomplishments, reforms

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, native colonists fought for independence from their rulers in various parts of the world. Empires of the past, such as the Spanish, Dutch and French, were in decline while the British Empire was at its peak, with the largest footprint throughout the globe. Sepoy Mutiny (also called the Indian Battle of 1857) was a big event that not only shook the British Empire to its core, but also caused a lot of international attention, too. The news of this historic event quickly travelled around the globe, making it one of the first global media events. The records of the Indian Battle of 1857 are still available in these countries' archives, poems, books, and novels, despite the fact that it has faded from memory around the world. In terms of its domestic dimension, i.e., the motives of the Battle, the actual battles fought, and other pertinent information issues, the Battle of 1857 has been thoroughly examined by numerous Indians, British, and other historians. The international dimension of the 1857 Indian Battle and how the Battle's actions were covered in the foreign press, has yet to be fully studied and written about. This essay attempts to examine the global response to this pivotal historical moment in Indian history.

Background

Between 1757 and 1857, the British ruled India, which was marked by imperialist and economic exploitation of Indians and disturbance of their social and religious structures. The British, believing that they had a complete understanding of the Indian mind and needs, continued to exploit them for far too long, causing the Indians to Battle. The Indian Battle of 1857, which occurred exactly one hundred years after the Battle of Plassey, offered a very serious and credible challenge to the British and was on the verge of ending British control.

The 1857 Battle was a massive uprising against British rule in which angry princes, alienated sepoys, and disillusioned elements took part. However, it is crucial to note that the East India Company has faced opposition from various factions in various parts of the subcontinent since its establishment. People from different tribes, peasants, and religious groups tried to fight back, but it was not well-coordinated.

A succession of civil unrest and local uprisings occurred, which were dispersed, localised, and mostly violent. The majority of these revolutions were sparked by popular anger with British rule, although some were sparked by personal grievances. The people of India have witnessed the tremendous transfer and looting of riches from India to Britain for over a century. With the help of their revenue policy, which had established a class of exploitative intermediaries, the disgruntled monarchs and feudal lords attempted to reclaim lost ground. Tribals rebelled in resentment of the disturbances and dislocations created by non-tribals exploiting them.

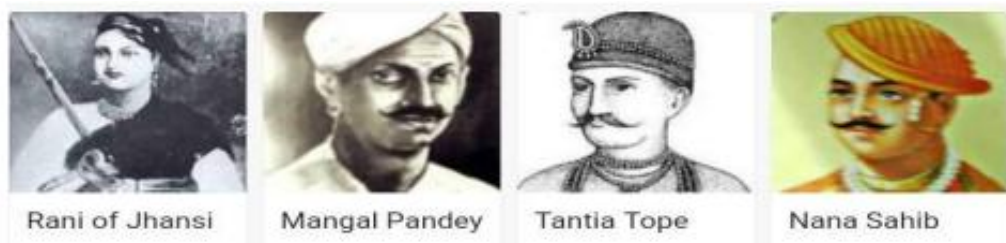


Figure 1: Leaders of the 1857 Battle

Nonviolent religious and political uprisings and riots took place against the British East India Company. This includes the Bengali Sanyasi and Faquir rebellions, the Wahabi movement, and the Punjabi Kukka movement, among others. As a result, the 1857 rebellion was the culmination of increasing resentment. In some situations, the British were able to put down these uprisings quickly, while in others, the conflict was drawn out and resulted in severe casualties. Despite the fact that these disturbances and uprisings did not succeed in removing British control from India, they served as forerunners to the Great Battle of 1857. On May 10, 1857, sepoys of the East India Company's army mutinied in the cantonment of Meerut, beginning the insurrection. Then, in the shape of sepoy and civilian rebellions, it extended throughout the upper Gangetic plain and central India. The current combat zones are in Uttar Pradesh, northern Madhya Pradesh, and the Delhi region.

Leadership

The contributions of four notable military leaders— Rani Lakshmi Bai, Nana Saheb, Begum Hazrat Mahal, and Kunwar Singh—were critical to the Battle's success.

Rani Lakshmi Bai (1828–1858) was the tallest and most inspiring commander of the 1857 Battle, employing "scorched-earth tactics" to combat the British. She inspired her sepoys to take the collective oath of "fighting till death" before the Battle of Kalpi (May 1858). Many women in her realm were likewise inspired, taught, and led to fight by her.

Nana Saheb (1824–1859), a Maratha Peshwa, made a significant contribution to the war against the British. In July 1857, his decision to murder nearly 200 British men, women, and children (who had been kept captive in Bibighar for two weeks) made him the most despised character in British history.

Begum Hazrat Mahal (1820–1879), popularly known as the Begum of Awadh, was a powerful woman who rose up against the British in 1857. She organised an army of women after gaining control of the Awadh State and put up a strong fight. Following that, she and her confidantes fled to Nepal on January 7, 1859. The British offered her the chance to return to India, but she declined, and she fought for independence for a further twenty years, until she died.

Kunwar Singh (1777–1858) was another famous military leader who, despite his elderly age, led the Bihar rebels in their fight against the British forces. Despite his lack of formal military experience, he exhibited tremendous courage and will in leading the Bengal Army's three regiments in Dinapur in a mutiny. Due to his charisma and leadership qualities, he was able to persuade a huge number of Indians to fight the British for the defence of Arrah.

Major Reasons for the 1857 Battle

1. **Economic Reason:** The British East India Company's directives undermined Indian society's economic framework. They (the British East India Corporation) had included a number of revenue settlements, such as the Ryotwari agreement, the Mahalwari agreement, and the Permanent agreement (which came into effect in 1793). In all of the agreements, the East India Company imposed heavy taxation, and in order to collect those taxes, many moneylenders and investors were employed at usurious rates. Occasionally, peasants were unable to set up the taxes to pay, so they took out loans from them're no longer capable of levying supply taxes, even on rare occasions. These issues have the potential to destabilize Indian agriculture. In addition, the British imposed a high tariff on trade.
2. **Political Reasons:** The British East India Company has implemented policies such as "Effective control," "Subsidiary alliance," and "Doctrine of Lapse" that deny Hindu and Muslim princes the power to appoint their children as princes and the right of succession. The Mughals and princes of East India have been humiliated by the British.
3. **Administrative Reasons:** There is a lot of corruption within the British East India Company's management, particularly amongst the police, petty officers, and lower regulation courts.
4. **Social and Religious Causes:** Britishers believe they are superior to Indians. The British attempted to market Christianity while eradicating other religions. They abolished the sati, the guide to widow-marriage, and women's education, but Indians believe they still exist within the social and spiritual domains of Indian civilization.
5. **The Riot's Suppression:** The disturbance was put down when Britishers began shooting every chief and imprisoning them to death, while Bahadur Shah was taken prisoner and royal princes were arrested and publicly executed at point blank

range by Lieutenant Hudson himself. As a result, all of India's political leaders died one by one, and British rule over India was re-established at the end of 1859.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A particular incident at a certain time did not start the war. Ordinary individuals from all walks of life have been affected long-term. The fighters acted the way they did due of their previous experiences, even during the war (Jones, 2007).

The War of 1857 was a massive undertaking. As a result of the incident, Indians' standing had shifted. Previously, Indians were not permitted to participate in local government; however, local self-government was established under Lord Ripon (Viceroy of India, 1880–1844), with Indians participating (Nanda, 2003). Aside from administrative changes, the British Raj instituted numerous legal reforms and constitutional, such as the "Act for the Better Government of India (1858)." A lot of people think that this was the first big step toward legal reform, but it was actually the colonial authorities who took the first step.

There was no sense of Indian nationalism among Indians before the fight. Regional, ethnic, and religious identities were more important to them than national ones. Initially, Indians began to grasp develop and politics a a sense of patriotism in India for the first time after the war, as opposed to their divided identities. They started forming parties in politics and mobilising on both at the national and regional levels (Darraj, 2011).

As a result of the war, certain acts were introduced. Some were brought in to satisfy British needs, although they were more concerned with the Indian perspective than they had been before the war. Some of the acts were enacted in response to demands from political parties in India; They may not have fulfilled all of the requirements, but they did include some of them (Qureshi, 1985).

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is carried out using qualitative research approaches. For a better grasp of the facts, original historical records were studied. The topic's secondary sources span a period of more than 150 years. Text from several decades has been provided to represent various points of view. Because the topic is tripartite (Muslims, Hindus, and British), it is vital to have writers from all three parties to ensure neutrality. In order to prove the hypothesis, an inductive strategy was used.

IV. ADVISABILITY

We could call the 1857 war a failure because the goals for which it was fought were not achieved. As an example, expelling the British from India, uniting Indians, and restoring Mughal sovereignty are all possible goals. It was not, however, a complete failure. People were able to effect beneficial changes as a result of the war.

Those who have given their lives in the service of their country and compatriots have gotten little appreciation for their contributions. It was the first time in the history of the Indian Subcontinent when Indians battled together without regard to racial or religious differences, and there were also those who did not choose to fight. Another point of contention is who was loyal to the country and who was not. People who were opposed to the British or those who supported them, for example, A look at the causes reveals the motivations of those who are fighting and those who are not fighting. Regardless of the immediate cause of Mangal Pande's actions, two forces were undoubtedly at work in his mind, and in his thoughts companions. Colonel Wheler, their leader, had lied to his troops when he said the rumours about the sepoys being converted to Christianity were untrue. Wheler admitted that he was aggressively preaching his beliefs and that he believed it was his Christian responsibility to do so. Second, the presence at Barrackpore of fifty European soldiers from HM's 53rd Regiment, in anticipation of the 19th Bengal Native Infantry's disbandment the next day, could only have added to the sepoys' fears of another parade ground massacre like the one that occurred in 1824.

It was difficult to avoid a war with the EIC's absolute authority over North West India until 1849, when the EIC was forced to retreat to the banks of the Indus. 2013 (Roy). They'd amassed such a large territory that maintaining control was impossible. At the time (Roy, 2013), Bengal had the highest presence of Indian troops in the British Army at the time. When the EIC set up a presidency for it, it was the first one. It had the most people of any Indian province, too.

V. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The British East India Company was liquidated in the Following Year

One of the significant outcomes of the conflict was the end of the British East India Company's oppressive control in 1858. This war's outcome was a significant achievement in and of itself, even if we ignore the other outcomes. "Sayyid Ahmad

greeted the return of peace with joy. The Crown's takeover of the company's dominions directly linked India's and Britain's fortunes. This, he believed, was the most fortunate event in the history of the two countries. "

The East India Company, which reached Calicut in 1608 and expanded like a live creature, eventually gaining Until 1857, the British had control over the majority of India. People in other provinces like Sind and Punjab and Owadh and Madras lost to the company after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. They also lost to the company. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan attacked the corporation and blamed it for the conflict in his book *Causes of Indian Battle*, published in 1858. It strongly attacked the company's leadership and demonstrated that the revolution was the product of decades of grievances and cumulative wrongs, all set against a strong social backdrop.

A member of parliament, John Bright, was a critical opponent of the BEIC's work. He was also extremely loud about it. On June 24, 1858, he made four accusations against the company in a speech. He stated that the Indian people had been "gravely neglected," that there was a lot to be angry about when it came to the administration of justice, and that there was a widespread perception that the East Indian government was corrupt had spent too much money.

A detailed examination of the company's 100-year rule reveals the atrocities that the people of the subcontinent endured. Other than persecution caused only for social and religious reasons, the Indian people have undergone the biggest economic hardship. The firm, which only cared about one thing in the Subcontinent: profit has economically suffocated the inhabitants in all spheres of existence for its own gain. Although the economic connections were not fully severed after the war, there were undoubtedly reliefs. Many lands confiscated by the firm under various laws and treaties were returned to their original claimants. Furthermore, Indians were given greater chances in the services, which reduced people's frustration and gave economic relief. "The retreat of the Doctrine of Lapse and the founding of three universities at Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras marked the Viceroyalty of Canning (1858–1862)."

India's Legal Status

The Indian people had no status prior to the war and under the company's administration. In 1858, Britain officially recognised India as a British territory. Because the British East India Company was in charge of the administration of the land for their own interests rather than the growth or welfare of the Indian people, the Indian people had no legal position. They failed to represent Indians when it came to drafting legislation for the country. Following the conflict, the Declaration of 1858 granted citizenship to Indians who had no status under the company's control. "The internal administration was completely overhauled." In fact, this defining event had a greater impact on the British than on the Indians. "

According to history, the Indian people were merely a stumbling block in terms of the economy profit for the corporation, which it attempted to overcome through various legislation. During the company's dominance, legislation was passed that overlooked the people's welfare, religious beliefs, and social fabric.

The Act for the Better Government of India was the most notable result of the Mutiny (1858). "The Pitts India Legislation of 1784" had started the process, and this act brought it to a close (Nanda, 2003). Following the battle of 1857, many changes took place in India due to which Indian citizens got more and more rights. When the Declaration of 1858 was made, it was the first in a long line that predicted and directed future changes.

"The Queen, who rejected the first declaration and also asked for a revised draught "breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious toleration," renounced any desire to expand his land, assured to be revered "the rights, dignity, and honour of native princes and to uphold religious toleration," and announced that it was his will to "accept as much and impartially as and fairly the offices of our servitude.

The Indian Councils Act of 1861 marked a significant step forward. The legislature was expanded to include Indians for the first time. The legislature was expanded to include all of the states. "In India, Canning's rule was marked by yet another remarkable achievement."

Many more changes were implemented in India, providing relief to the people. "Lord Ripon's immortal contribution was the institution of local self-government." The main goal of establishing self-government at the local level was to properly teach Indians the art of governing so that they could eventually take over the management of India. Indians were not permitted to participate in any form in the administration prior to Lord Ripon "(Nanda, 2003, p. 220). During the 1880s, these reforms helped Indians gain confidence. It also provided citizens with a better grasp of politics. For example, Ameer Ali, for example, stepped out to set an example for others, and as a result of his abilities, he became an integral component of the British machinery. Many more people after him did the same thing and gave their lives to serve their country.

End of Armed Conflict

In 1608, the British arrived in India, with the first British ship landing in Calicut, but Emperor Jehangir refused to allow them to trade in India. Later, under the rule of Prince Khurram, they were allowed to trade in Gujarat Province. They have been traders in India from then, till 1757. Bengal was conquered in the Plassey's Battle, Siraj Udaula was beaten by the British in this battle the Bengal's Nawab. BEIC became involved in Indian politics and administration over the following hundred years, till 1857. During this century of tyranny, many Indians across the country took up weapons against the British.

For instance, in 1763, the Buxar's Battle, Awadh's Shuja ud Daula, Bengal's Mir Qasim, and Mughal monarch Shah Alam II participated fought the British, Hyder Ali in Mysore in 1770, Tipu in 1780, Ranjeet Singh in Punjab and Sindh in 1843, and so on. Since BEIC's foot soldiers were Indians, thousands of Indians were slaughtered on both sides throughout this time.

The year 1857 marked the conclusion of the slaughter and violence. As previously discussed, the BEIC was replaced by direct British administration after the war. Between 1857 and 1947, when India gained independence and Pakistan was established, no fight on the scale of the preceding ones was waged. For the time being, there were several political movements that turned violent. People like Iqbal, Nehru, Jinnah, Tilak, Hasrat Mohani, Gnadhi, Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, and others were born after the war because of British educational reforms. They could fight against the British in political and constitutional battles.

The establishment of Congress in 1885 was not a minor event. It gave the history of the subcontinent a new depth. Although it began with the goal of improving ties between the ruler and the ruled, we later learnt that the same Congress was able to use a political movement to force the British out of their borders. As a result of this political engagement, Muslims were obliged to form the Muslim League in 1906. As history has shown, the League enabled Muslims to accomplish what no other country has been able to do: acquiring land based on ideology (Israel is an example, Western powers, however, supported it). To settle Indian concerns, the Congress and the League offered constitutional measures. India's face was changed by newly educated Indians resistance to foreign occupation. India's people were no longer looking for a solution to their issues with a lance or a bullet, but rather with thoughts and discourse.

Reforms in Order

The "Government of India: The first significant result was the submission of "An Act for the Betterment of India" on August 2, 1858. Indians gained the legal status of colonial subjects as a result of this act. It wasn't perfect; It was, nonetheless, preferable to having no status. Between 1858 and 1947, the UK Parliament authorized 196 municipal, private, and public acts connected to India and Indian issues. (The House of Commons of the United Kingdom). Most of them gave Indians a little more power and freedom than the previous rule, which eventually led to their own country.

The Governor General of Allahabad published Queen Victoria's proclamation on November 1st, 1858, and it was reassuring in its language and purpose. She apologized for the EIC rule and promised to treat Indians equally. "We deplore the calamities and misery that have befallen India as a result of the actions of ambitious men who have fooled their countrymen with false tales and driven them into open rebellion" (Godley, 1908).

She made a solemn commitment to Indians not to undertake expansionist conflicts within the country. "While we will not allow any aggression on our dominions or rights to be tried with impunity, we will not support any infringement on those of others." We will treat local princes' rights, dignity, and honour as if they were our own, and we hope that they, like our own subjects, will benefit from the wealth and social growth that can only be achieved through internal peace and good governance (Godley, 1908).

During the time of the EIC, one prominent kind of discrimination was the possibility of working for the firm. High-ranking positions were exclusively granted to British citizens, and natives were not given an equal chance. "Our subjects, of whatever race or faith, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the responsibilities of which they may be qualified to fulfill, by their education, talent, and honesty," the Queen says in her proclamation (East India Proclamation, 1858).

In 1861, the initial steps toward incorporating Indian representation into law were completed. Provincial legislative councils were formed in addition to the central legislative council, and membership was expanded to "non-official" members. The 1861 Indian Councils Act was intended to improve communication. As a result, there is a disconnect between the government and the governed. The Act created a Legislative Council by reorganizing and expanding the Governor-Executive General's Council. The Legislative Councils of Madras and Bombay were reconstructed and expanded. It also called for the establishment of similar Bengal councils, the Punjab, and North-Western Provinces, with at least half of the new or "extra" members coming from outside the civil service in each case. The Act of 1861 is credited with creating the representational principle in the Indian constitution because the bulk of the "non-official" members chosen were Indians. But that wasn't the same as surrendering to representative governance, which Macaulay had opposed for a decade. For the most part of Council members were still officials, and the Governors nominated rather than elected the small groups of non-official members. Furthermore, they only had legislative authority. They couldn't even ask inquiries about executive business, let alone talk about it.

The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was one of the changes that breathed new life into the politics of the Subcontinent. The Viceroy had previously nominated Indians, but now the Indian people were to elect them. Indians were exposed to democracy in a sense. "The Act also allowed for an elected element in the country, partially meeting Congress's requirement." The members were supposed to be nominated by the President of the United States, but the Act stipulated that some of the seats by representatives filled the positions of various interests and bodies, municipalities, such as corporations, landowner associations, district boards, chambers of commerce and universities. Because bodies elected by the people could only

nominate their appointed representatives for nomination to the Governmental Leader, the system was not quite an election system. Nomination was never declined in practice. "(Qureshi, p. 821) Sir Syed highlighted his concerns about Muslim rights protection at this time. As a result of this restricted form of democracy, he predicted Hindu dominance. After the partition of Bengal in 1905, his fears were realised. Hindu unrest prepared the stage for the Muslim League's formation in 1906.

The Morley Minto reforms, also known as the Indian Councils Act of 1909, were enacted by the British. These reforms were crucial for Muslims because the demand for distinct electorates was legally recognized and the Partition of Bengal was not undone by the British. With more elected members, the national and provincial councils were also extended. "The establishment of separate electorates for Muslims established legally and constitutionally the status of the Muslim community in the Sub-Continent as a distinct entity and that of the Muslim League as the only significant Muslim organization".

For the first time, Act of the Government of India, 1919 lowered the number of official members even further. The provinces were also introduced to the diarchy system, which granted the elected governments in the provinces limited powers. More Indians were able to choose their representatives by making voting easy for them.

This is not the end of the legislative reforms. Political parties in India are becoming more active and open about their objectives and strategies. On January 24, 1929, the Congress requested complete independence. The Three Round Table Conferences show how important local political parties are in Indian law.

Finally, the Indian Act of 1935 met many of the requests of Indians as a whole. Despite the fact that all political parties were not totally satisfied with it the bulk of them accepted it with misgivings, and parties ran in the 1937 elections. Provinces created political governments, and provinces were given practically complete authority over their affairs. This was the last thing the people of India did before they reached their goal, independence.

VI. CONCLUSION

Steps such as the reversal of the lapse doctrine, the grant of citizenship to the Indian people, Indians' participation in the legislative process, some of the war's consequences indicated that the combatants who sacrificed their lives to attain goals that were not always evident to them did not fully fail. We may say that the Subcontinent's full independence was the result of a succession of achievements that began with the 1857 war and ended in 1947 with the formation of Pakistan and India.

The conflict of 1857 is one of history's most enigmatic events. Every aspect of this historic event needs close scrutiny. For example, it's difficult to come up with a name for the event; for example, if it's called the Indians who participated in the EIC army and aided the British during the "War of Independence" would be deemed traitors. Everyone who fought against the British is a traitor if this is dubbed the "Indian insurgency of 1857."

The war's consequences or outcomes were generally characterized as defeat or failure. By embracing this version, all those who fought against the British have their efforts and sacrifices overshadowed. On the contrary, the research's discussion vividly demonstrates that numerous good impacts were obvious both soon after the conflict and later. Prior to the fight, from 1608 until 1857, the British occupied India for 250 years, exploiting the country's riches and people. They were ejected by Indians who carried the belief of the 1857 soldiers that they would not accept dictation from outsiders until 90 years after the fight (from 1858 to 1947).

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