

UPSC 2020

Topic – Hunter Commission Report – GS-I

The Hunter Commission of 1882 was presided by Sir William Hunter and was appointed by Lord Ripon, the then viceroy of India. The hunter commission was constituted on 3rd April 1882, after a request of general council of education was made to Ripon. This article will provide you important facts about the topic, 'Hunter Commission Reports' of 1882 and 1920 that are of significance for Modern Indian History of subject of the [IAS Exam](#).

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Hunter Commission - Who was Sir William Hunter?

Sir William Hunter was an Indian Civil Service officer and a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy.

History of Modern India for UPSC is closely related to the History of the British Raj in India. Due to this, major commissions, laws and events related to the raj are an important part of the UPSC Syllabus. In this article, we will discuss the Hunter Commission Reports of 1882 and 1920 in relation to the [IAS Exam](#) and the merits of the Hunter Commission.

Hunter Commission Report of 1882

The following were the main objectives:

Consider different aspects of education in India, paying particular attention to primary education.

Enquire into the execution of [Wood's Despatch](#) of 1854 and suggest ways to improve outcomes of the same.

What Were the Main Recommendations of the Hunter Commission?

Major recommendations by the Hunter Commission of 1882 resulted in the following changes in the education system of British India:

- Preference was given to literate candidates for government jobs in the lower levels, along with expansion of primary schools in backward districts.
- District and municipal boards were entrusted with the management of primary education under the Local Self Government Act. The funds were separated for rural and urban areas to avoid funds earmarked for rural schools being misappropriated by urban schools.
- Secondary schools were to be established by private parties with funds provided by the government. Model schools fully run by the government were to be opened in each district to guide such private schools.
- Secondary school curriculum was also revised with academic and vocational courses diversified into different branches.
- Missionary schools were discouraged and Indian participation in the private school system was solicited by the raj. Special care was supposed to be taken in advancing the education of girls and women.

Though most of these changes were positive, these changes were only limited to the schools following the system laid down by the British Indian Government. As traditional schools died out from lack of funding and enrolment, the government school system became more and more overburdened, resulting in systemic problems in primary education that affect the society even today.

This is an important part of the UPSC Syllabus for History of India and Indian National Movement for IAS prelims as well as IAS Mains General Studies. This topic is part of the static syllabus of UPSC, hence should be read in detail.

Hunter Commission of 1920

While the Hunter Commission of 1882 was appointed by the then Governor-General in circumstances of relative peace, the Hunter Commission of 1920 was appointed by the then Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu under far more tragic circumstances during a time of turmoil. The official name of the Hunter Committee of 1920 was the Disorders Inquiry Committee and was constituted after the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh on 13 April 1919. The events leading up to the actions of General Dyer at Jallianwalla Bagh are well known and form an important part of the History of the Freedom Movement. The [Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre](#), also known as the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 took place when General Dyer of the British Indian Army ordered his troops to open fire and keep firing into a crowd of unarmed people inside Jallianwalla Bagh. The Hunter Commission of 1920 appointed to investigate the Amritsar Massacre had the following members:

- Lord William Hunter, Chairman of the Hunter Commission, former Solicitor General of Scotland
- W.F. Rice, Home Department member
- Thomas Smith, Member, Legislative Council, United Provinces
- Pandit Jagat Narayan, Member, Legislative Council, United Provinces and lawyer
- H.C. Stokes, Secretary of the Commission and Home Department member
- Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Khan, Gwalior State lawyer
- Sir Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad, Vice-Chancellor, Bombay University and advocate, Bombay High Court
- Mr Justice George C. Rankin, Calcutta

- Major-General Sir George Barrow, KCB, KCMG, GOC Peshawar Division

Due to the commission being composed of both British and Indian officials, there were reports of racial tension between them. In spite of this, the committee unanimously condemned General Dyer's actions and published the following findings:

- Dyer did not ask the crowd to disperse before opening fire into the crowd and continued firing until ammunition was exhausted. This constituted a serious error.
- Dyer's intention of producing moral effect through the use of force was condemnable and he had exceeded the limits of authority assigned to him.

There was no conspiracy to oust British Rule from Punjab that had led to the assembly of people at Jallianwalla Bagh.

The Indian members added to these findings, the following observations:

- Orders prohibiting public meetings had not been sufficiently circulated in Punjab in general and in Amritsar in particular which could have prevented the Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre.
- Innocent people formed the crowd at Jallianwalla Bagh and there was no violence before the massacre.
- Dyer should have ordered troops to help the wounded people or informed civilian authorities to arrange aid. His actions were condemned as inhuman and greatly damaged the image of the British in India.
- The Hunter Commission report was important in the context that its findings paved the way for public opinion in both Britain and India gradually turning against British rule in India. In particular, General Dyer was relieved of command and officially rebuked by the House of Commons of the UK based on his actions and statements during the massacre and afterwards.
- The Hunter Commission report findings were also instrumental in the development of the use of minimum force in crowd control worldwide.

Due to the impact of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre on the freedom movement and the scale of brutality shown by the British Indian Army troops, the Hunter Commission of 1920 is an important part of the static syllabus on History of the Freedom Movement for Prelims and General Studies for IAS Mains.

2019 being the centenary year of the tragedy at Jallianwalla, the Government of India has decided to mark the remembrance of the people killed in the Amritsar Massacre. This means that the Amritsar Massacre and the Hunter Commission is also part of the dynamic syllabus of UPSC 2020 exam and questions from this concept could be asked in Current Affairs for IAS.