

List of Important Leaders Associated with the Revolt of 1857

The British faced many instances of resistance from Indians throughout their occupation of India. One such popular resistance was the incident of the Revolt of 1857. The storm-centres of the revolt were **Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Jhansi and Arrah**. All these places threw up their own leaders who, for all practical purposes, remained independent, even though they accepted the suzerainty of Emperor Bahadur Shah.

Introduction

- In 1857 in much of northern and central India, the linkage of the revolt of the army with that of the people proved to be a dangerous combination for colonial rule.
- On 29th March 1857 in Barrackpore near Calcutta, there took place a disturbance when a sepoy, **Mangal Pandey** killed one of the European officers.
- It began in the lines of the native infantry, spread very swiftly to the cavalry and then to the city.
- The ordinary people of the town and surrounding villages joined the sepoys.
- He was arrested, tried and executed. The regiments of Barrackpore were disbanded.
- The news of Mangal Pandey very soon reached other parts of the country and resulted in open revolts.
- The most decisive uprising occurred at **Meerut**, where 85 sepoys of the cavalry regiment were sentenced to 2-10 years imprisonment for refusing to use greased cartridges.
- The very next day, on 10th May 1857, three regiments broke into open mutiny. They killed British officers and broke open the prison to release their comrades.
- They began to march towards Delhi, where they were joined by the local infantry and the common people.
- The rebels captured Delhi and killed many British officers. They declared the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah as the emperor of India. From Delhi, the revolt spread to other places.

Leaders of Revolt of 1857

The leaders associated with the revolt of 1857 and their respective centres of revolt are tabled below:

List of Leaders and the Centres of Revolt

Leaders of Revolt of 1857	Centres
General Bakht Khan	Delhi
Nana Saheb	Kanpur
Begum Hazrat Mahal	Lucknow
Khan Bahadur	Bareilly
Kunwar Singh	Bihar
Maulvi Ahmadullah	Faizabad
Rani Laxmibai	Jhansi

Mangal Pandey

- Mangal Pandey was born in a high caste Hindu family in Uttar Pradesh (Ballia).
- He joined the 34th Bengal native infantry as a sepoy at a young age.
- He was enraged knowing that the cartridge used in the New Enfield rifles were made up of animal fat, mainly from cows and pigs.
- The sepoys felt their religion was in grave danger, and this is considered as one of the major sparking points of the 1857 Revolt.
- Then, he fired upon Lt. Baugh the Adjutant of the 34th Bengal native Infantry at Barrackpore on **29th March 1857**.
- He encouraged his fellow sepoys to join him.
- He was later arrested in injured condition and was sentenced to death.
- He was hanged on 8th April 1857, ten days before the fixed date of execution.
- The daring and dashing act of Mangal Pandey triggered off a series of revolts all over the country.
- The Indian government issued a stamp to commemorate him in 1984.

General Bakht Khan

- In Delhi, Bahadur Shah was the leader.

- But the real power lay with the soldiers. Bakht Khan, who had led the revolt of the soldiers at Bareilly, arrived in Delhi on 3rd July 1857.
- From that date, he exercised real authority in Delhi.
- He formed a Court of soldiers that composed of both Hindu and Muslim rebels.

Nana Saheb

- At Kanpur, the revolt was led by Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II.
- The rebellious sepoys also supported Nana Saheb and under his leadership, both the military and civilian elements were united. They expelled the British from Kanpur and Nana Saheb was declared the Peshwa.
- His troops were commanded by **Tantya Tope** and **Azimullah**.

Begum Hazrat Mahal

- At Lucknow, the Begum of Awadh provided the leadership and proclaimed her son, Birjis Qadr, as the Nawab of Awadh.
- But here again, the more popular leader was Maulavi Ahmadullah of Faizabad, who organised rebellions and fought the British.
- Therefore, in Lucknow, Begum Hazrat Mahal was assisted by **Maulvi Ahmadullah**.

Rani Laxmibai

- Rani Lakshmi Bai/Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi was another great popular leader.
- She believed that she had been robbed of her ruling rights in defiance of recognised Hindu law.
- Though she showed some hesitation at the initial stage, she fought valiantly once she joined the ranks of the rebels.

Kunwar Singh

- He was a local zamindar in Arrah in Bihar.
- Under his leadership, the military and civil rebellion were so completely fused that the British dreaded him the most.

