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Q2

## **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.**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS I · 10 marks · The Freedom Struggle

The Freedom Struggle - its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country.

### **Core demand of the question**

- 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
- Cover both big and small local rebellions in that hundred years
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

### **Revision summary**

Company rule after the 1750s faced repeated local revolts, not a peaceful century.

Small risings included Sanyasi-Fakir, poligar, Ramosi, Bhil, and indigo fights.

Larger wars included Paika Khurda, Kol, Santhal Hul, and frontier resistance.

Land revenue, annexation, and disbanded armies linked those fights to the Bengal sepoys.

1857 was the widest joining of that older pattern, centred on Delhi, Awadh, and the Doab.

### **Introduction**

British power after Plassey did not sit on a quiet countryside. For about a century, peasants, tribals, poligars, and sepoys rose in many places. 1857 gathered those local angers into a wider military and civil revolt.

### **Body**

#### **Small and local risings**

- Sanyasi and Fakir bands in Bengal, and later the Pagal Panthi and Faraizi movements, fought rent, company trade, and religious levy in the east.
- Poligar wars in the south, the 1806 Vellore sepoy revolt, and the 1824 Barrackpore episode showed that garrison troops could mutiny over caste, pay, and overseas service.
- Ramosi risings under leaders such as Umaji Naik, Bhil unrest in Khandesh, and Ho and Munda fights on the plateau were village and hill wars against new police and tax.
- Indigo protests in Bengal and countless tahsil-level fights over auctioned land never became a national war, but they taught people that the Company could be resisted.

#### **Larger rebellions before 1857**

- The 1817 Paika rebellion of Khurda under Bakshi Jagabandhu, Kittur under Rani Chennamma in 1824, and Ahom and Khasi resistance in the north-east were regional wars against annexation.

- The Kol rebellion of 1831-32 and the Santhal Hul of 1855-56 under Sidhu and Kanhu were mass tribal wars against dikus, moneylenders, and Company courts.
- After Mysore, the Marathas, and the Sikhs were broken, disbanded soldiers and cut pensions left a military class that 1857 would later recruit.
- Annexation of Awadh in 1856, the Doctrine of Lapse, and heavy land revenue in the Doab turned taluqdars and peasants toward the same camp as the Meerut sepoys.

### Why 1857 was a culmination

- The greased-cartridge spark in the Bengal Army joined a century of land, forest, princely, and religious grievance from Delhi to Awadh, Bundelkhand, and parts of Bihar.
- Centres such as Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi, and Bareilly were new in scale, but the social fuel was the older pattern of local revolt, now led by sepoys and some chiefs.
- The revolt still failed to cover all of India, which itself proves that 1857 grew out of many regional histories, not out of one sudden national plan.

### Flow diagram

Local peasant tribal poligar wars -> Fuel of anger  
Sepoy Vellore Barrackpore -> Fuel of anger  
Annexation revenue Awadh -> Fuel of anger  
Fuel of anger -> 1857 Delhi Awadh Doab  
1857 Delhi Awadh Doab -> Culmination not a sudden start

### Conclusion

1857 did not begin from a blank year. It was the largest joining of sepoy mutiny with the peasant, tribal, and princely rebellions that British rule had faced since the late eighteenth century. Later nationalism would organise that anger; it did not invent it.

### Facts & figures

#### Vellore, 1806

Sepoy revolt in the south over caste marks, dress, and garrison rules, a preview of later military mutiny.

#### Paika rebellion, 1817

Khurda rising under Bakshi Jagabandhu against Company land and militia policy in Odisha.

#### Kol rebellion, 1831-32

Chotanagpur tribal war against outsiders, farms, and Company authority.

#### Santhal Hul, 1855-56

Mass revolt under Sidhu and Kanhu against moneylenders, police, and diku landlords.

#### Awadh annexation, 1856

Dalhousie's takeover that turned taluqdars, peasants, and sepoys of the region toward 1857.

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