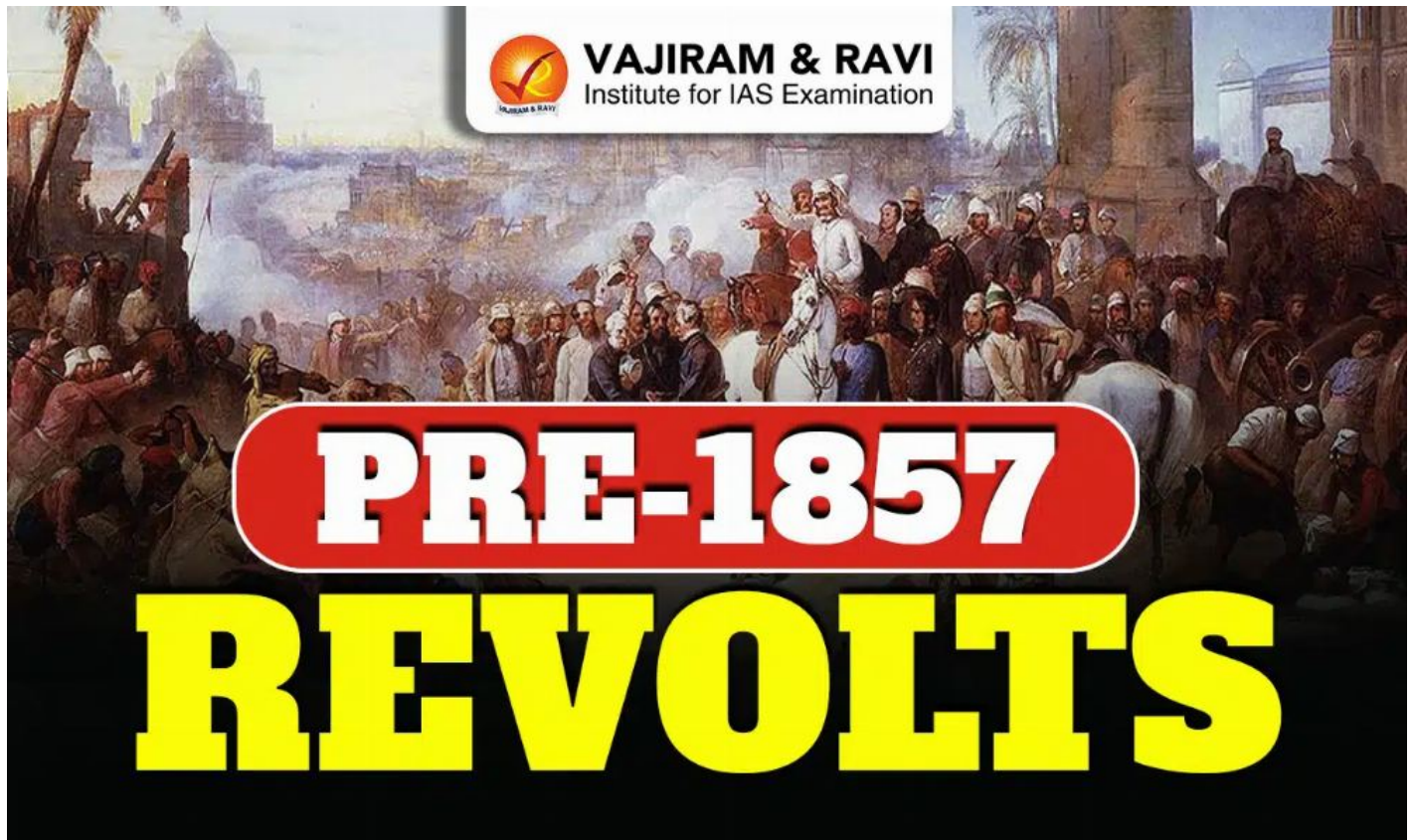


Pre-1857 Revolts, Year, Leaders, Causes, Features

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Pre-1857 Revolts in India form an important phase of early resistance against British rule, reflecting widespread discontent across civil society, tribal regions, peasant communities, and the sepoy army due to economic exploitation, loss of traditional authority, and interference in social-religious life. These uprisings, though largely local and uncoordinated, collectively laid the foundation of anti-colonial consciousness in India.

Civil Uprising

Civil Uprisings in colonial India were early revolts by local rulers, peasants, tribal groups, and religious leaders against British rule, mainly due to high taxes, loss of land and power, and interference in their traditional social and economic systems

Sanyasi-Fakir Rebellion

- **Year:** 1763-1800
- **Leaders:** Majnum Shah (Majnu Shah), Chirag Ali, Musa Shah, Bhawani Pathak, Debi Chaudhurani
- **Causes:**
 - The famine of 1770 devastated eastern India, leading to mass starvation and collapse of rural life.

- The exploitative revenue system of the **British East India Company** increased pressure on peasants and zamindars.
- Many peasants were evicted from land, while small zamindars lost their estates.
- Disbanded soldiers and rural poor, left without livelihood, joined the uprising.
- Traditional rights of sanyasis and fakirs (like collecting alms and moving freely) were restricted by the Company.

- **Features:**

- It was a broad-based revolt, involving sanyasis, fakirs, peasants, zamindars, and ex-soldiers.
- The movement showed Hindu-Muslim unity, hence also called the Fakir Rebellion.
- Rebels adopted guerrilla-style attacks, targeting Company factories, treasuries, and officials.
- The rebellion was long-drawn and persistent, posing a serious challenge to British authority in Bengal.
- It was suppressed by Warren Hastings after prolonged military action.
- Women's participation, especially Debi Chaudhurani, highlights early gender inclusion in resistance movements.
- The revolt inspired literary works like Anandamath and Devi Chaudhurani, reflecting its historical and cultural significance.

Poligar Wars

- **Year:** 1795-1805

- **Leaders:** Veerapandiya Kattabomman, Oomathurai, Marudu Pandian (Marudus), Subramania Pillai, Soundara Pandian

- **Causes:**

- The transfer of control of Carnatic territories to the British (1781) by the Nawab of Arcot reduced the autonomy of poligars. Poligars, who earlier functioned as independent local chiefs, resented British interference.
- Heavy taxation and revenue demands by the East India Company triggered immediate conflict.
- The British treated poligars as enemies rather than allies, creating political hostility.
- In later phases, issues like loss of traditional rights (e.g., kaval fees) intensified resentment.

- **Features:**

- The revolt occurred in three phases (1795-1805) across South India; the first led by Veerapandiya Kattabomman, followed by a more organised second phase under Oomathurai and the Marudu brothers, involving capture of forts like Tuticorin.
- The British used brutal suppression – executions, destruction of forts like Panjalankurichi, and administrative control yet the revolt reflected an early anti-colonial political consciousness.

Velu Thampi's Revolt

- **Year:** 1808-1809

- **Leaders:** Velu Thampi

- **Causes:**

- **Subsidiary Alliance** (1805) imposed a heavy financial burden on Travancore.

- The state failed to pay the subsidy, leading to constant pressure and threats from the British.
- The British Resident interfered in internal administration, reducing the ruler's authority.
- The Company's arrogant and high-handed behaviour created resentment among officials and people.
- Growing fear that the British would take complete control over Travancore's sovereignty.

- **Features:**

- The revolt was led by Velu Thampi, the Prime Minister of Travancore, with the support of Nair troops.
- It began with the Kundara Proclamation (1809), in which he openly called upon the people to take up arms against the British.
- The revolt weakened significantly because the Maharaja of Travancore did not support Velu Thampi and instead sided with the British. The Company responded with strong military action to crush the rebellion.
- Facing inevitable defeat and to avoid capture, Velu Thampi committed suicide, after which the revolt came to an end.

Paika Rebellion

- **Year:** 1817

- **Leaders:** Bakshi Jagabandhu

- **Causes**

- The British introduced a new land revenue system in Odisha, which affected traditional land rights.
- The Paikas (traditional militia) lost their rent-free land grants, leading to economic distress.
- The decline of the Khurda kingdom and British takeover reduced their status and role.
- Exploitative policies and oppression by British officials created widespread resentment.

- **Features:**

- Led by Bakshi Jagabandhu, the revolt saw active participation of Paikas, peasants, and local chiefs.
- Rebels attacked British establishments, police stations, and symbols of authority.
- It spread across Khurda, Puri, and nearby regions of Odisha.
- The British used military force to suppress the revolt, and it was eventually crushed.
- It is considered one of the early organised armed resistances against British rule in eastern India

Ahom Revolt

- **Year:** 1828

- **Leaders:** Gomdhar Konwar, Dhanjay Borgohain, Jairam Khargharia Phukan

- **Causes:**

- The British had promised to leave Assam after the First Burma War (1824-26), but they did not withdraw.
- Instead, they tried to bring Ahom territory under direct British control.
- This created fear among the Ahoms that they would lose their king and traditional rule.

- **Features**

- Led by Gomdhar Konwar, the rebels proclaimed him king at Jorhat, aiming to restore Ahom rule.
- It was a political revolt to remove British control and re-establish the Ahom kingdom.

- The British did not rely only on force; they followed a conciliatory policy.
- Part of the Ahom kingdom was restored to Purandar Singh, reducing tensions.

Kuka Movement

- **Year:** 1840 (origin); became political after British annexation of Punjab; suppressed by 1872
- **Leaders:** Bhagat Jawahar Mal (Sian Saheb), Baba Ram Singh
- **Causes:**
 - The movement started as a religious reform effort to purify Sikh society (remove caste, improve discipline).
 - Then the British annexed Punjab in 1849, ending Sikh rule → this created political anger.
 - At the same time, British policies and influence were seen as threatening Sikh traditions and identity.
 - So, the movement shifted from religious reform to political resistance, aiming to remove the British and restore Sikh rule.
- **Features:**
 - Led by Baba Ram Singh, it evolved from a religious reform movement into a political anti-British movement.
 - Emphasised social reforms—rejection of caste, support for widow remarriage, and equality within Sikh society.
 - Promoted Swadeshi and boycott of British goods, laws, and education (early form of non-cooperation).
 - Aimed to end British rule and restore Sikh sovereignty in Punjab.
 - The British suppressed the movement (1863–1872) and deported Baba Ram Singh to Rangoon.

Wahabi Movement

- **Year:** Early 19th century; active resistance mainly till 1880s–1890s
- **Leaders:** Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly
- **Causes:**
 - The movement emerged as an Islamic revivalist response to Western influence on Muslim society.
 - It was inspired by the teachings of Abdul Wahab and Shah Waliullah, who advocated a return to pure and original Islam.
 - Growing resentment against foreign (British) rule in India, which was seen as corrupting Islamic values.
 - Desire to transform India from Dar al-Harb (land of chaos/war) to Dar al-Islam (land of Islam).
- **Features:**
 - Led by Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly, it was a well-organised religious-political movement with a secret network of Khalifas.
 - Its centre of operations was at Sithana in the north-west frontier, with important bases like Patna
 - It declared jihad first against Sikh rule in Punjab and later against the British after 1849.
 - The movement helped spread strong anti-British sentiments across regions like Bengal, Hyderabad, and Bombay.
 - The British suppressed it through military action and sedition trials, though sporadic resistance continued till the late 19th century.

Tribal Uprisings

Tribal Uprisings in Pre-1857 India reflect the widespread resistance of tribal communities against British colonial policies, economic exploitation, and the disruption of their traditional socio-economic systems. These uprisings, though localised, reveal a consistent pattern of opposition to land alienation, administrative interference, and the intrusion of outsiders into tribal regions.

Jungle Mahal Revolt (Chuar Uprising)

- **Year:** 1767–1799
- **Leaders:** Jagannath Singh, Durjan Singh, Shyam Ganjan, Subla Singh, Dubraj, Madhab Singh, Raja Mohan Singh
- **Causes:**
 - Increase in land revenue by the British, which jungle areas could not sustain.
 - Introduction of Permanent Settlement and new administrative policies, affecting zamindars and peasants.
 - Dispossession of zamindars (e.g., Durjan Singh) due to British regulations.
 - Decline of traditional roles as paiks (local guards) were replaced by British police.
 - Overall disruption of tribal-agrarian life and resistance to outsiders (non-Adivasis).
- **Features:**
 - The uprising occurred in multiple phases, involving Chuars (Bhumij tribes), zamindars, and paiks.
 - Early phase led by Jagannath Singh (1768) saw temporary success against the Company.
 - The most significant phase (1798) under Durjan Singh involved large-scale violent resistance, including attacks to stop land auctions.
 - It reflected a clash between traditional tribal-agrarian system and colonial policies.
 - The British brutally suppressed the revolt by 1799.

Kol Mutiny

- **Year:** 1831
- **Leaders:** Buddho Bhagat
- **Causes:**
 - Large-scale transfer of tribal land from Kol headmen to outsiders (moneylenders, farmers, traders).
 - Exploitation by outsiders, who imposed heavy taxes and used coercive practices.
 - British land revenue system ignored traditional tribal rights and ownership patterns.
 - Introduction of new judicial system, which weakened the authority of tribal chiefs.
 - Overall disruption of the traditional social and economic structure of the Kols, leading to resentment.
- **Features:**
 - Led by Buddho Bhagat, it was a tribal uprising against outsiders and British authority.
 - The rebels attacked moneylenders, traders, and settlers, killing many and destroying property.
 - The revolt spread across the Chhotanagpur region (Ranchi, Singhbhum, Hazaribagh, etc.).
 - The British used large-scale military operations to suppress the rebellion after heavy violence.

Santhal Rebellion

- **Year:** 1833 (background unrest), 1855–1856 (major revolt)
- **Leaders:** Sidhu Murmu, Kanhu Murmu, Chand, Bhairav, Phulo, Jhano
- **Causes:**
 - Loss of land as zamindars and moneylenders (dikus) gradually took over Santhal lands.
 - Heavy taxes under Permanent Settlement (1793) forced Santhals into debt.
 - Exploitation by mahajans, who charged high interest and seized land on non-payment.
 - Failure of Damin-i-Koh system to protect Santhal land and rights.
 - Oppression by British officials, police, and the revenue system, creating widespread resentment.
- **Features:**
 - Led by Sidhu Murmu and Kanhu, it was a large-scale tribal uprising aimed at ending British rule.
 - The rebels declared their own authority in the region between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal.
 - The movement saw mass participation, including women like Phulo and Jhano.
 - The British suppressed it with extreme brutality, killing thousands and destroying villages.
 - After the revolt, Santhal Pargana was created with special administrative provisions.

Khond Uprisings

- **Year:** 1837–1856
- **Leaders:** Chakra Bisoi
- **Causes:**
 - The British attempted to suppress the Meriah (human sacrifice) practice, interfering in tribal customs.
 - Imposition of new taxes by the Company.
 - Entry of zamindars into tribal areas, which threatened the Khonds' control over land and autonomy.
- **Features:**
 - Led by Chakra Bisoi, with support from Khonds and neighbouring tribal groups like those of Ghumsar and Kalahandi.
 - The revolt spread across hilly regions from Odisha to Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam.
 - It was a prolonged and intermittent resistance (1837–1856) against British policies.
 - The movement declined after the disappearance of Chakra Bisoi, leading to its end.

Ramosi Risings

- **Year:** 1822; 1825–26; 1839–41
- **Leaders:** Chittur Singh, Umaji Naik, Bapu Trimbakji Sawant
- **Causes:**
 - Annexation of Maratha territories by the British.
 - Loss of livelihood as Ramosis, earlier employed by Marathas, were displaced.
 - Resentment against British administration and policies.
 - Deposition and banishment of Raja Pratap Singh of Satara triggered later unrest.
- **Features:**

- The revolt occurred in multiple phases, mainly in the **Western Ghats** (Satara, Poona region).
- Led by Umaji Naik and others, the Ramosis carried out raids and plunder against British-controlled areas.
- The disturbances continued intermittently till 1841, showing persistent resistance.
- The British used military force to suppress the risings, but also followed a conciliatory policy, recruiting some Ramosis into hill police.

Major Peasants Revolts

Peasants' Revolts in colonial India were local uprisings by farmers and tribal communities against high taxes, exploitation by zamindars, and oppressive British policies that affected their land, income, and livelihood.

Pagal Panthi Movement

- **Year:** 1825–1835
- **Leaders:** Karam Shah (founder), Tipu Shah
- **Causes:**
 - Tribal peasants (Hajong and Garo) were under zamindars who demanded very high rent. This led to economic exploitation and hardship for the peasants.
 - When the peasants could not pay such high rent, pressure and oppression increased.
 - As a result, they organised under Tipu Shah to resist excessive rent and protect their livelihood.
- **Features:**
 - Led by Tipu Shah, the movement became an organised resistance of tribal peasants against zamindars.
 - The peasants refused to pay rent beyond a fixed limit, directly challenging exploitation.
 - When pressure continued, they attacked houses of zamindars as a form of protest.
 - The movement forced the government to introduce some protective measures, but it was eventually suppressed violently.

Faraizi Revolt

- **Year:** 1838–1857
- **Leaders:** Haji Shariatullah, Dudu Miyan (Muhsinuddin Ahmad)
- **Causes:**
 - The movement started as a religious reform effort under Haji Shariatullah to purify Islamic practices.
 - At the same time, peasants were being heavily exploited by zamindars through high rents and oppression.
 - This created economic hardship and social unrest among tenants.
 - Along with this, there was growing anger against British rule, which supported this exploitative system.
 - Therefore, the movement gradually shifted from religious reform to socio-political resistance, aiming to protect peasants and oppose British authority.
- **Features:**
 - Led by Dudu Miyan, it became an organised mass movement of peasants and followers.

- It combined religious reform with political resistance against British rule.
- The movement strongly supported tenants against zamindars, gaining wide rural backing.
- It continued for a long period (1838–1857), showing sustained resistance.
- Many followers later joined the Wahabi movement, linking it to a broader anti-British struggle.

Moplah Uprisings

- **Year:** 1836–1854
- **Leaders:** There was no single central leader; the uprisings were local and spontaneous, led by local Moplah chiefs and religious figures in different areas.
- **Causes:**
 - The British introduced high land revenue demands, which peasants found difficult to pay → this created economic distress.
 - At the same time, the size of landholdings was reduced, lowering agricultural income → peasants became more vulnerable.
 - The land system placed Moplah peasants under Hindu landlords (jenmis), leading to tenurial insecurity and exploitation.
 - Oppression by officials and landlords (harsh rent collection, evictions) increased suffering.
 - These combined economic and social pressures led to repeated peasant unrest and rebellions in Malabar.
- **Features:**
 - The uprisings were repeated and localised, with about 22 outbreaks (1836–1854) across Malabar.
 - They were mainly peasant revolts against landlords and British authority.
 - The rebels attacked landlords (jenmis) and officials, showing agrarian anger.
 - The movements were unorganised and lacked central leadership, so none succeeded.
 - The British suppressed each uprising with military force.

Sepoy Mutinies

A number of sporadic military uprisings took place before the Great Revolt of 1857 in different parts of the country.

Causes of Sepoy Mutinies: There was rising discontent of the sepoys against the British rule due to the following reasons:

- discrimination in payment and promotions;
- mistreatment of the sepoys by the British officials;
- refusal of the government to pay foreign service allowance while fighting in remote regions;
- religious objections of the high-caste Hindu sepoys to Lord Canning's General Service Enlistment Act (1856) ordering all recruits to be ready for service both within and outside India.

Further, the sepoys shared all the discontent and grievances – social, religious, and economic – that afflicted the civilian population.

Major Sepoy Mutinies before 1857:

- **Vellore Mutiny (1806):** One of the earliest and most serious revolts by Indian sepoy against the British. It was triggered by new dress regulations (ban on religious symbols, use of leather) that hurt religious sentiments. The revolt was quickly suppressed with force.
- **Barrackpore Mutiny (1824):** Sepoys refused to cross the sea (Kala Pani) during the First Anglo-Burmese War, as it violated religious beliefs. The British suppressed the revolt harshly.
- **Sholapur Mutiny (1838):** A smaller uprising by sepoy due to grievances over pay and service conditions. It was quickly controlled by the British.
- **Hyderabad Mutiny (1842):** Sepoys of the Hyderabad contingent revolted due to discontent over allowances and service rules. The British suppressed it with military action.
- **Punjab Mutinies (1849-1850):** After the annexation of Punjab, sepoy showed discontent due to new service conditions and loss of privileges. These were minor revolts but indicated growing unrest.

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