

Special Report

By

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# The 10th May, 1857

**Windowing in the History on Completing 150 Years of the Meerut Revolt against Britishers.**

## PREAMBLE

*The Meerut has been the main centre point to start our Struggle of Independence. The native sepoys had terminated the use of cow-fat-greased cartridges. A massive Massacre of British Officers and their families took place after the Revolt. The given lines have been taken from the famous book on Indian Freedom Struggle - "Battles of the Indian Mutiny" written by 'Michael Edwardes' published first by in 1963 by B.T. Batsford Ltd. and then by Pan Books Ltd., London in 1970. The details of the Author are not given the book.*

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## **THE REASON OF THE REVOLT**

By the end of 1856 the whole of India - and particularly the north - was uneasy. Nearly every class had been shaken in some way by the reforms and political changes instituted by the administration. Only those Indians who were most westernized were unaffected by fear. The newly emerging middle class had no wish to preserve the old order untouched, and during the Mutiny they remained actively loyal. But the dispossessed were awaiting their opportunity. Those princes who had lost the territories they felt to be rightly theirs, the king of Oudh - who had been deposed in 1856 and whose kingdom had been annexed - the last sad descendants of the Mughal emperors at the twilight court of Delhi, all were awaiting and opportunity to rise in rebellion. Their agents were active among the sepoys, playing upon their fears and exciting their apprehensions, recalling the table that 100 years after the battle of

· Plassey would come the day that saw the  
· end of British rule. The fuel was ready for  
· the fire, all that was needed was a spark.  
· The British themselves provided it.  
· In 1857 it was decided to replace the old  
· musket known as Brown Bess with the new  
· Enfield rifle, which had a much longer range  
· and infinitely greater accuracy. To load the  
· new rifle entailed biting a greased cartridge.  
· The sepoys believed with some justification,  
· that the grease was made from cow or pig  
· fat - the first, from an animal sacred to the  
· Hindus, and the second from an animal held  
· unclean by the Muslims. The Hindu sepoys  
· saw this as an attempt to break their caste  
· as a but with increasing momentum, sepoy  
· regiments refused to accept the new  
· cartridges and finally broke in to open  
· mutiny. To them rallied the disaffected. At  
· last the opportunity had come to make a  
· stand against the British and, with the Bengal  
· Army at heir backs., the rebels seemed to  
· have every chance of success.  
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JOURNAL OF  
COMMERCE  
& TRADE

### THE RISE OF MEERUT

The first real outbreak of the Mutiny took place at Meerut, some 40 miles north-east of Delhi, on Sunday, May 10th. Meerut was the most important military station in the area and had a European garrison of considerable size, consisting of one infantry and one cavalry regiment, and some artillery. The native troops were of almost equal strength. On the surface, Meerut seemed the least likely place in northern India for a mutiny, or, if one started, for a successful one. Yet both happened. In Delhi, the old imperial capital, there was a brigade of three regiments of native infantry and a light field battery.

On April 23rd, the native cavalry at Meerut refused to use the greased cartridges. A native court martial, convened to try the mutineers, handed out long sentences of imprisonment. Then, on May 9th, the divisional commander ordered that the convicted men, shackled with leg-irons, should be paraded in front of the whole garrison. Eighty-five shuffled down the lines in the heat of a hot -weather morning. The next day the native regiments broke into open revolt at a rumour that the British troops were coming to attack them. The jail was broken open and the prisoners released, bungalows and offices were set on fire, isolated British officers and their families attacked and murdered.

The military commanders, caught off balance in a situation for which they had neither precedent nor experience, hesitated for long enough to permit the mutineers to leave the city. No one expected that they would make for Delhi, a long distance away in the gruelling Indian sun, and no cavalry was sent to pursue them. By the morning of

the next day, Meerut was deserted and silent. The curtain, however, was going up on the drama at Delhi.

The capture of Delhi by the mutineers was to have a tremendous effect on the sepoys. Delhi was the former capital of the Mugahal emperors and, in the recesses of the palace, the last representative of the house of Timur still kept shadowy court, a pensioner of the British. Inside the palace, too, were those who had waited long for an opportunity to do something against the British who had usurped the Mugahl power and that his heir must renounce the title of king and leave the palace. When the sepoys arrived they were welcomed as liberators, and all the romance and glamour of a once great native dynasty rising again were grafted on to their simple ais. There was little or nothing that the few British officers and civilians in Delhi could do against the three native regiments, the mutineers from Meerut, and the retainers of the king. The and guarded only by native troops. The main magazine was some three miles outside the city, having been moved there a few years earlier for added security. That, too, was guarded by native infantry. By nightfall of the 11th, the Europeans in prisoners in the palace, many had been killed either by their own men or in the palace, many had been killed either by their own men or in the blowing up of the arsenal to prevent it mained intact and was handed over to the nutineers by its native guard. Three thousand barrels of powder were saved to sustain the mutineers for three months against the attacks of the British.

