

Nana Sahib?

Who was Nana Sahib?

Nana Sahib was the adopted son of the last Peshwa, Bajji Rao II. After his father's death, the British denied him pension and recognition, using the Doctrine of Lapse. This unfair treatment made him bitter and hostile toward British rule. Living in Kanpur, he became a natural leader when the revolt broke out in 1857.

Revolt at Kanpur

In June 1857, sepoys at Kanpur rebelled and joined Nana Sahib. He declared himself Peshwa and led the fight. The rebels surrounded the British entrenchment, cutting off their supplies. The British faced hunger and desperation and agreed to surrender after three weeks.

The Satichaura Ghat Incident

On 27 June 1857, the British were allowed to leave Kanpur by river. However, as they boarded boats at Satichaura Ghat, firing broke out. Many British men were killed, and women and children were captured. This massacre, later called the "Cawnpore Massacre," shocked the British. Although historians debate Nana Sahib's role in it, his name was blamed.

The Fall of Kanpur

Soon, British reinforcements under General Havelock arrived. Despite strong resistance, the rebels were defeated due to poor weapons and lack of supplies. Nana Sahib fled Kanpur, and his trusted ally Tatya Tope carried on the struggle. Nana Sahib's later fate is uncertain—some accounts suggest he escaped to Nepal.

Reasons for Failure at Kanpur

The revolt in Kanpur failed for several reasons:

- The rebels had poor organization and outdated weapons.
- British reinforcements arrived quickly using railways and telegraph.
- The Satichaura Ghat massacre damaged Nana Sahib's image.
- Lack of unity among local rulers weakened the rebellion.

These factors made it impossible for the Kanpur uprising to survive, even though it showed immense bravery.

Conclusion

Nana Sahib's opposition at Kanpur was one of the most dramatic episodes of the 1857 War.

Although the rebellion ended in tragedy and failure, Nana Sahib became a symbol of resistance against injustice, and his defiance inspired future freedom movements.