

MANGAL PANDEY: PERSONALITIES / HISTORY

NEWS: PM Modi pays tribute to freedom fighter Mangal Pandey on his birth anniversary

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

On July 19, 2025, India observed Mangal Pandey's birth anniversary, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders paying tribute to the freedom fighter credited with sparking the 1857 Revolt.

Mangal Pandey: A Leading Figure of India's First Organized Resistance

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently paid tribute to the great freedom fighter Mangal Pandey on his birth anniversary, commending him as a leading warrior who challenged British rule.

Background and Significance:

- **Symbol of Resistance:** Mangal Pandey is widely remembered as a profound symbol of India's *first organized resistance* against British colonialism.
- **Spark of Revolt:** His courageous and defiant actions are frequently considered the direct *spark that ignited the Revolt of 1857*.
- **First War of Indian Independence:** This widespread rebellion, ignited by his act, later became historically known as the *First War of Indian Independence*.

Early Life:

- **Birth:** He was born on **July 19, 1827**.
- **Family Background:** He hailed from a **Brahmin family** near **Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh**. At that time, this region was part of the North-Western Provinces under British rule.
- **Influences:** He was deeply influenced by strong religious and cultural beliefs, which significantly shaped his opposition to British policies that were perceived as offensive to religious sentiments.

Military Career:

- **Enlistment:** Mangal Pandey joined the **British East India Company army in 1849**.
- **Rank and Unit:** He served as a **sepoy (private soldier)** in the **6th Company of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry**.
- **Station:** His unit was stationed at **Barrackpore, Bengal Presidency**.

Immediate Cause of Revolt (The Cartridge Controversy):

- **New Enfield Rifle Cartridges:** The primary and immediate cause of widespread discontent was the introduction of new **Enfield rifle cartridges**.
- **Greased with Offensive Fat:** These cartridges were notoriously greased with a mixture believed to contain **cow and pig fat**.

- **Hindu Sentiments:** Hindus hold cows as sacred animals, making contact with cow fat deeply offensive.
- **Muslim Sentiments:** Muslims consider pigs unclean, making contact with pig fat equally abhorrent.
- **Loading Procedure:** Soldiers were required to **bite the cartridge** to tear it open before loading the rifle. This act directly violated the religious sentiments of both Hindu and Muslim soldiers, leading to widespread and intense resentment among the sepoys.

Act of Rebellion (March 29, 1857):

- **Location and Date:** On **March 29, 1857**, at Barrackpore, Mangal Pandey initiated his act of defiance.
- **Attack on British Officers:** He **attacked his British superior officer, Sergeant Major Hewson**, by firing upon him.
- **Call for Mutiny:** He actively **encouraged other sepoys to rise in mutiny** and join his rebellion against the British authorities.
- **Nature of Action:** His act was largely **spontaneous** and not a part of a pre-planned, large-scale uprising at that very moment, but it served as a powerful inspiration for subsequent widespread rebellion across India.

Punishment and Aftermath:

- **Capture and Trial:** Mangal Pandey was promptly **captured** following his rebellion and subjected to a **court-martial**.
- **Execution:** He was **executed by hanging** on **April 8, 1857**, at a location known as **Lal Bagan in Barrackpore**.
- **Disciplinary Measures:** As a severe disciplinary measure, the entire **34th Bengal Native Infantry** was **disbanded** by the British. This mirrored a similar earlier action taken against the 19th Infantry at Berhampore.
- **Symbol of Resistance:** Mangal Pandey's martyrdom quickly transformed into a powerful **symbol of courage and resistance** throughout India, galvanizing anti-British sentiment.

Legacy:

- **Patriotic Icon:** He is revered as a **patriotic icon** and a celebrated **freedom fighter** in the annals of Indian history.
- **National Recognition:** The Indian government has honored his memory by **issuing postage stamps in his name**.
- **Cultural Adaptations:** His inspiring story has been widely adapted into various forms of media, including **books, television shows, and films**.
- **Annual Observance:** **Mangal Pandey Jayanti**, observing his birth anniversary on **July 19**, is commemorated annually in his memory.

Source: <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/pm-modi-pays-tribute-to-freedom-fighter-mangal-pandey-on-his-birth-anniversary/>