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Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

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Abstract

The paper deals the Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919, resulting in the massacre that shocked the Punjabi people and sent vibrations throughout India. Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, Punjab, a sizable contingent of unarmed citizens, including men, women, and children, had assembled to peacefully protest the oppressive Rowlatt Act and call for political reforms. General Reginald Dyer's British troops unexpectedly opened fire on the mob, leaving hundreds dead and thousands crippled. The study reveals the historiographic concerns about the binary prioritization of narratives that are divided into two distinct strands of dominant discourse and marginalized narratives are raised by the portrayal of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. This study will also explore a few writings highlighting alternative and first-hand accounts of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in both Hindi and English. These texts will assist us in comprehending the act of representation that highlights how memory is viewed and given significance as a framework for national history and a distinctive sign.

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1. Introduction

The massacre in Jallianwala Bagh is among the most callous massacres committed in India by British forces. One of Punjab's most well-known religious holidays, Baisakhi, fell on April 13, 1919, and it turned out to be the day of the most callous atrocities by British soldiers in India. The brutal killing of thousands of defenceless, unarmed individuals is indicative of the nation's communal harmony. In a proclamation circulated around the city, Brigadier General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer declared that any procession or gathering of four or more people would be considered an unlawful assembly and dispersed by force of arms if necessary (Chadha 2019). The Amritsar or Jallianwala murders proved to be a watershed in the history of Indian independence.

During a period of ten minutes, 1650 shots were fired. Dyer ordered the concentration of fire on the exits and other areas where the crowd was densest. Only after his ammunition was nearly empty did he command the firing to cease. An official report states that 1200 people were injured and 379 people were killed (Tuteja 2019). The official number, however, is well below the real number of victims, which was substantially higher. The slaughter was strongly condemned

both India as well as Britain. For example, it was described as a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation by Winston Churchill, who went on to become Prime Minister of Britain (Shahnawaz 2022). Such reactions show that even people who thought the British government in India was founded on fairness were taken aback and unsettled. Many people in India believed it to be a horrific incident that had never been seen before. Mahatma Gandhi's response eloquently captured the suffering brought on by the massacre and what the terrible incident meant to the Indian populace when he wrote: The massacre had a significant impact on how the nation's anti-imperialist fight developed later on and helped to fortify the forces that opposed British rule in India.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To intimidate the Indian population and suppress growing nationalist sentiment in Punjab;
- To create a sense of fear and deter future protests and gatherings against British rule;
- To demonstrate British military power and authority over the Indian population.

- iv) To suppress dissent and opposition to British colonial rule, particularly in the context of the Rowlatt Act and the growing nationalist movement.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 To intimidate the Indian Population and Suppress Growing Nationalist Sentiment in Punjab

The British colonial authorities brutally attempted to stifle the burgeoning nationalist sentiment in Punjab and scare the Indian populace with the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Here are the salient details:

- Nationalist movements exploded in India in the early 20th century, with Punjab serving as a focal point.
- The protests and turmoil were further stoked by the British government's Rowlatt Act, which permitted the arrest and imprisonment of people without a trial.

a) The Massacre

- General Reginald Dyer, the British troops' commander aimed to produce an "awe-inspiring effect" and quell the increasing nationalist fervour in Punjab.
- Hundreds were killed and numerous others were injured when Dyer's troops opened fire on a peaceful assembly of Indians at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919.
- People were trapped within the park and unable to leave since the army closed the primary exit.

b) Aftermath

- The massacre incredibly energised the nationalist cause by igniting huge protests and rioting throughout India.
- In response to the demonstrations, the British government tightened its control over civil rights and used force to end the disturbances.
- An important turning point in Indian history, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, stoked anti-British sentiment and ultimately led to the end of British colonial control in India.

c) Impact on the Nationalist Movement

- The slaughter sparked the nationalist movement, and figures such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi used it to rally support for Indian independence.
- The episode exposed the harshness of British colonial rule and boosted sympathy for the nationalist movement domestically and abroad.
- Future generations of activists and leaders are motivated by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, which continues to be a potent symbol of resistance against colonialism and injustice.

An important turning point in Indian history, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre exposed the harshness of British colonial rule and signalled a dramatic increase in the fight for independence.

3.2 To Create a Sense of Fear and Deter Future Protests and Gatherings Against British Rule

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre aimed to instil fear and deter future protests and gatherings against British rule in India. This is a thorough analysis:

a) Sense of Fear

- The massacre was a ruthless demonstration of British military might meant to terrify and threaten the Indian populace.

- There was fear and a sense of powerlessness as a result of the careless shooting at an unarmed throng that included women and children.
- To intimidate the entire city of Amritsar and the larger Indian populace, the slaughter was carried out as a kind of collective punishment.

b) The Deterrent Effect

- The British government anticipated that by putting an end to dissent and challenge to their rule, the massacre would instill terror and obedience.
- The ruthless use of force was meant to discourage future demonstrations and assemblies by making Indians reluctant to oppose British rule.
- Rather than via discussion or change, the British sought to keep control of India through repression, intimidation, and terror.

c) Consequences

- The Jallianwala Bagh massacre fuelled opposition to British rule and heightened nationalist feelings rather than putting an end to protests.
- Across India, the killing provoked intense indignation, demonstrations, and opposition, which ultimately aided in the expansion of the Indian independence movement.
- Indians were traumatized and resentful for a long time after the slaughter, which fuelled their continued resistance to British authority and influenced their fight for independence.

3.3 To Demonstrate British Military Power and Authority over the Indian Population

A vital instance that showed British military might and control over the Indian populace was the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, often called the Amritsar Massacre. At Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, a peaceful gathering of Indians was shot at by General Reginald Dyer's British troops.

- The mob assembled at Jallianwala Bagh to commemorate the Sikh holiday of Baisakhi and to peacefully protest the Rowlatt Act.
- Hundreds were killed and numerous others were injured when General Dyer and his forces unexpectedly opened fire on the unarmed throng after arriving on the scene.
- Men, women, and children were all the targets of the soldiers' indiscriminate fire, which lasted for roughly ten minutes.
- People were trapped within the park and unable to leave since the army closed down the main access.

a) Demonstration of British Military Power

- The British military's resolve to repress dissent and uphold authority through violence was proved by their use of force against an unarmed crowd.
- The slaughter demonstrated an apparent indifference to human life and a lack of compassion for the Indian populace.
- By using force to impose their will on the Indian populace, the British troops demonstrated their dominance over them.

b) Impact

- Indians were deeply traumatized and incensed by the carnage, which fuelled their desire for independence.
- The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre was a significant turning point in Indian history by elevating nationalism above loyalism.

- The slaughter remains a gloomy chapter in the history of the British administration in India, symbolizing the ruthless suppression of Indian rights and liberties.
The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre was a glaring example of British military might and control over the Indian populace, highlighting the harsh tactics used to uphold order and quell opposition.

3.4 To Suppress Dissent and Opposition to British Colonial Rule, Particularly in the Context of the Rowlatt Act and the Growing Nationalist Movement

The British colonial authorities' attempts to quell dissent and challenge their rule are best illustrated by the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, a significant event in Indian history. Growing demonstrations against the Rowlatt Act and the emerging nationalist movement prompted the 1919 Amritsar, Punjab, massacre.

a) Growing Nationalism and the Rowlatt Act

- The Rowlatt Act, which permitted the arrest and imprisonment of people without a trial, was approved by the British government in March 1919. Indians viewed this action as a blatant assault on their civil liberties, which made it extremely unpopular with them.
- With leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Lala Lajpat Rai promoting Indian rights and self-rule, the Indian nationalist movement gained traction in the early 20th century.

b) Suppression of Dissent

- Amritsar was one of several Indian cities where protests and rallies erupted in response to the Rowlatt Act. The British government reacted violently because they believed that these protests threatened their authority.
- The assembly in Jallianwala Bagh was viewed by General Reginald Dyer, who commanded the British forces in Amritsar, as a chance to establish British dominance and quell opposition. Hundreds were killed and numerous others were injured when he abruptly ordered his forces to open fire on the throng.

c) Impact of the Massacre

- The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre significantly impacted the Indian nationalist movement. Many Indians became more resolute in fighting for their freedom and rights, which boosted support for the cause.
- By demonstrating that the colonial authorities were prepared to resort to severe violence to keep control, the slaughter heightened discontent with the British administration.
- Following the massacre, British policy started to change as some officials started to doubt the ethics and viability of their reign in India.

d) Legacy of the Massacre

- In India, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre continues to serve as a reminder of British cruelty and tyranny. It acts as a reminder of the brutal tactics colonial regimes used to hold onto power.
- Future generations of Indians have been motivated to fight for their freedom and rights by the atrocity. It continues to be a significant aspect of Indian history and evidence of the nation's freedom movement.

The British colonial authorities' violent attempts to quell criticism and opposition to their rule were exemplified by the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. In generating support and intensifying anti-British feelings, the episode significantly impacted the Indian nationalist movement. It continues to be a significant aspect of Indian history and a representation of the nation's fight for independence and self-determination.

Conclusion

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre was a pivotal incident in Indian history that had an enduring effect. An important turning point in the Indian independence movement was the violent suppression of unarmed civilians by British forces, which fuelled nationalist sentiment and heightened anti-British sentiment. The slaughter acts as a reminder of the brutal tactics colonial regimes used to keep their hold on power and quell opposition. The sacrifices made by Indians in their struggle for independence and self-determination are also emphasised. The study indicates a vital part of Indian history; the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre represents the nation's fight for freedom and a symbol of defiance against oppression. Its memory serves as a reminder of the significance of defending human rights and averting future crimes of this kind.

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre is regarded as to be the darkest incident in Indian independence history. It demonstrated how bigoted and prejudiced the British were toward Indians. Many were shocked when the brutality of British rule was revealed. After the offenders nearly got away with it, moderates lost faith in the British. Gandhi's difficult approach led to his first wave of widespread demonstrations against authority. Despite the Hunter Commission's investigation, the guilty were spared severe punishment. Reginald Dyer caused the atrocity. He could not work in India, lost his army job, and passed up a promotion. Regretfully, General Dyer, who carried out the massacre, did not get much criticism in England. Some even commended him. Such backing brought pro-independence activists together while dividing Indians and rulers. There was no trial. He died due to illness in 1927 after retiring from responsibility in 1920. Young freedom warriors were motivated by the incident and went on to fight for India's independence. Britain evacuated India on August 15, 1945, as a result of their struggle. Future generations may combat injustice by keeping the past in remembrance.

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