



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

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Why is in news? President of India visits Amritsar; pays her obeisance at Sri Harmandir Sahib; remembers freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives at Jallianwala Bagh

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre was also called **Massacre of Amritsar**.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place on **April 13, 1919**, when troops of the British Indian Army, under the **command of Colonel Reginald Dyer**, fired machine guns into a crowd of **unarmed protesters and pilgrims** who had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab's Amritsar.

It was **Baisakhi** that day, a **harvest festival** popular in Punjab and parts of north India.

In Punjab, on 9th April 1919, two nationalist leaders, **Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal**, were arrested by the British officials without any provocation except that they had addressed protest meetings, and taken to some unknown destination.

This caused resentment among the Indian protestors who came out in thousands on 10th April to show their solidarity with their leaders.

To curb any future protest, the **government put martial law in place and law and order in Punjab** was handed over to Brigadier-General Dyer.

On 13th April, Baisakhi day, a large crowd of people mostly from neighbouring villages, unaware of the prohibitory orders in Amritsar gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh. The crowd had a mix of men, women and children.

The troops surrounded the gathering under orders from General Dyer and blocked the only exit point and opened fire on the unarmed crowd killing more than 1000 unarmed men, women, and children.

Response of the Indians:

This tragedy came as a rude shock to Indians and **totally destroyed their faith in the British system of justice**.

National leaders condemned the act and Dyer unequivocally.

Nobel laureate **Rabindranath Tagore** in his letter of protest **renounced the knighthood** conferred on him, condemning the brutal act of Britishers.

In protest against the massacre and the British failure to give due justice to the victims, **Gandhiji relinquished his title 'Kaiser-e-hind'** bestowed on him by the British for his services during the Boer War in South Africa.

In December 1919, the congress session was held at Amritsar. It was attended by a large number of people, including peasants.

Rowlatt Act:

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The Rowlatt Act was passed in **March 1919** by the Central Legislative Council **to control the militant nationalist struggles and curtailed the liberty of the people.**

The Bill provided for **speedy trial of offences by a special court and had no appeal.**

The provincial government had powers to search a place and arrest a suspected person without warrant. These gave **unbridled powers to the government to arrest and imprison suspects without trial** for two years maximum.

It caused a wave of anger in all sections spreading a country-wide agitation by Gandhiji and marked the foundation of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji organised the Satyagraha on 14th February, 1919. On 8th April, 1919 Gandhiji was arrested.