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# Yuvraj Pratap Singh of Kullu

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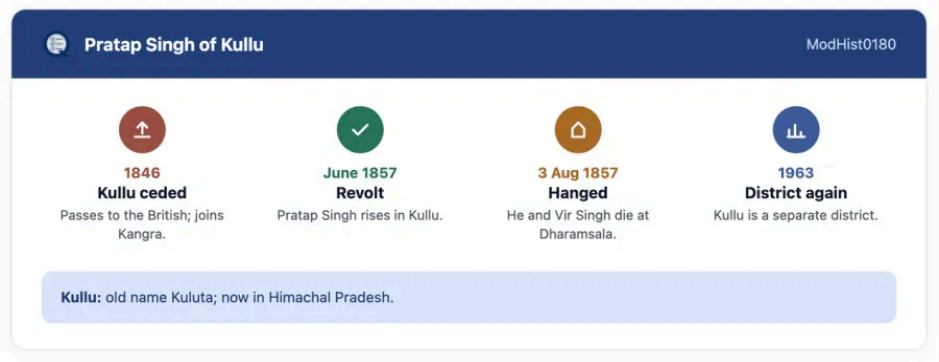
# Yuvraj Pratap Singh of Kullu

Most stories of 1857 head to Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur. This one is set far north, in the high green valley of Kullu.

A claimant to the local throne rose against the British in June 1857. Within weeks he was hanged. Very little was written down about him, and that is part of the story.



Naggar Castle above the Kullu valley, once the seat of Kullu's rulers. No photograph or portrait of Pratap Singh is known, so this view of his homeland stands in. Image: Vyacheslav Argenberg, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.




Four turning points in the Pratap Singh story, from standard sources.

**Place.** Kullu, in present-day Himachal Pradesh.
**Title.** Yuvraj, a prince and claimant to the throne.
**1846.** Kullu passed to the British and joined Kangra district.
**June 1857.** He led a revolt in Kullu.
**Companion.** Vir Singh, said to be from Baijnath.
**End.** Both hanged at Dharamsala on 3 August 1857.

**Yuvraj:** a prince, often the heir, in a royal family.

**Gaddi:** the seat of a ruler. In the hills it also means the throne.

**Nazrana:** a gift or payment a ruler made to a higher power as a sign of loyalty.

## 1 What was Kullu before 1857?

Kullu is a long valley along the river Beas. Its old name was Kuluta. Texts of the ancient world mention it. For centuries it was a small hill kingdom.

Its early capital lay near Jagatsukh. Later the rulers sat at Naggar, in a castle above the valley. In the 17th century Raja Jagat Singh moved the capital to Sultanpur. That is within today's Kullu town.

The same raja brought an image of Raghunath, a form of Lord Rama, to the new capital. This is the root of Kullu's famous Dussehra fair. Local deities still gather there each year.

The kingdom was split into administrative divisions called Wazaris. Seraj was one of them. Keep that word in mind. It comes up again in the revolt.

- Old name: **Kuluta**; the valley lies along the **Beas**.
- Capital moved from **Naggar** to **Sultanpur** under **Raja Jagat Singh**.
- Jagat Singh brought the **Raghunath** image; this is the root of **Kullu Dussehra**.
- The kingdom had divisions called **Wazaris**, such as Seraj.

> **Quick check 1.** Kullu was ceded to the British in 1846 and joined the Kangra district. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

## 2 How did British rule reach Kullu?

The change came in 1846. The First Anglo-Sikh War had ended. Kullu had been under the Sikh state. It was now ceded to the British.

It became a subdivision of the British-run Kangra district. This was part of the Punjab. The old kingdom lost its status as a separate hill state. Its ruling family kept a smaller local role.

A British officer, Major Hay, became the first Assistant Commissioner of the new territory. Naggar Castle passed into British hands in these years. Stories say the raja gave it up for a rifle.

Kullu remained a part of Kangra for more than a century. It became a district of Punjab only in 1963. In 1966 it joined Himachal Pradesh.

Now you can see the pressure behind 1857. A hill kingdom had become a district tehsil. A claimant to the old throne had good reason to feel the loss.

- **1846**: Kullu ceded to the British after the **First Anglo-Sikh War**.
- It joined **Kangra district** in the Punjab.
- **Major Hay** was the first Assistant Commissioner.
- Kullu became a separate district in **1963**.
- It joined **Himachal Pradesh** in 1966.

## 3 What happened in 1857?

In June 1857 Pratap Singh led a revolt in Kullu. Older teaching notes call him a Yuvraj, a prince. Some sources call him Raja. He seems to have come from Kullu's old ruling family. He is also said to have made a

claim to the gaddi.

He had help. His adviser was Vir Singh. Sources place him at Baijnath. A local Negi from the Seraj area is also named as a backer. The Negi's name is not given in the records I could find.

The uprising did not last. The British acted quickly. Accounts name William Hay, the British hill officer, in the response. Pratap Singh and Vir Singh were arrested.

Both were tried and hanged. The place was Dharamsala. The date was 3 August 1857. That is only weeks after the revolt began.

Some retellings give more detail. They name his father, give a family link to the reigning raja, or describe his exact plan. I could not confirm these. They are left out here. It is better to say little than to say something wrong.

- Revolt: **June 1857**, in **Kullu**.
- Leader: **Pratap Singh**, called Yuvraj in many sources.
- Adviser: **Vir Singh**, said to be from **Baijnath**.
- Backer: a **Negi of Seraj**, not named.
- Hanged at **Dharamsala** on **3 August 1857**.

## 4 How did other hill states behave?

Kullu was not the only hill region touched by 1857. But most of the hills stayed quiet. Many rulers helped the British.

At Kasauli and Jutogh near Simla, trouble came from sepoys. Their leader was Subedar Bhim Singh. They looted a treasury and burned a police station. They hoped to attack the British at Simla. Informers leaked the plan, and it failed.

At Kangra, sepoys planned to kill British officers. The Deputy Commissioner, Major Taylor, stopped it with help from the local police chief. At Nalagarh, mutineers from Jullundur looted the treasury in June 1857. The British put them down.

Bushahr was a special case. Its Raja, Shamsher Singh, refused to pay the customary nazrana. This nearly led to British action. But he did not join a rebellion.

Against this background, Kullu's revolt stands out. It was an armed rising led by a claimant, not a mutiny of sepoys. It was also one of very few such events in the hill states.

- **Kasauli and Jutogh**: sepoys under **Subedar Bhim Singh**; the plot leaked.
- **Kangra**: a mutiny plan stopped by **Major Taylor**.
- **Nalagarh**: Jullundur mutineers looted the treasury.
- **Bushahr**: Raja **Shamsher Singh** refused **nazrana**.

## 5 Why is he so little known?

The records are thin. A local newspaper once noted that very few references exist in the history of the time. The British wrote most of those records. They described events through their own eyes.

The speed of events also mattered. He was tried and hanged within weeks. That left little time for a long paper trail. National histories focus on bigger battles in the plains.

Local memory has kept him alive. The Brahmin Jankalyan Sabha of Kullu holds a yearly tribute for him. In 2015 its members called for a memorial at Nature Park, Mohal, in Kullu. They argued that young people in the district should know his name.

His story reminds us of one point. The Revolt of 1857 was not only a plains event. Its echoes reached the Himalayan valleys too.

- Records are **thin** and mostly **British-written**.
- Trial and hanging came within **weeks**.
- Local groups hold **annual tributes** in Kullu.
- A **memorial** in Kullu has been proposed.

## 6 What are the exam traps?

State exams in Himachal often ask about him. Watch these points.

- Pratap Singh of **Kullu** is not Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh.
- He was hanged at **Dharamsala**, not Shimla or Kangra.
- Date: **3 August 1857**.
- His companion was **Vir Singh**.
- **Bushahr** neither helped nor openly fought the British.
- Read about the Revolt of 1857.
- Read about the Anglo-Sikh Wars.
- Read about Himachal Pradesh.

> **Quick check 2.** Pratap Singh of Kullu was hanged at Shimla on 3 August 1857. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

**Remember:** 1846, Kullu ceded to the British. June 1857, Pratap Singh's revolt. 3 August 1857, he and Vir Singh hanged at Dharamsala.

**Think it through:** Why did so few hill states join the 1857 revolt?

Most hill rulers owed their position to the British and the Sikh settlement. Many saw gains in staying loyal. The hills also had few sepoy garrisons. That left little force for a rising.

**Quick check 3.** Raja Shamsher Singh of Bushahr refused the customary tribute but did not join the revolt. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

## Practice MCQs

**1. In June 1857, where did Yuvraj Pratap Singh lead a revolt against British rule?**

**A.** Jhansi, in present-day Uttar Pradesh

**B.** Kullu, in present-day Himachal Pradesh

**C.** Rewari, in present-day Haryana

**D.** Nagpur, in present-day Maharashtra

See answer ↓

**2. Which local chieftain backed Pratap Singh's 1857 revolt in Kullu?**

**A.** The Wazir of Chamba

**B.** The Thakur of Simla

**C.** The Rana of Bushahr

**D.** The Negi of the Seraj region

See answer ↓

**3. Who was arrested alongside Pratap Singh after the Kullu revolt?**

**A.** Kunwar Singh

**B.** Kishan Singh

**C.** Bakht Khan

**D.** Vir Singh

See answer ↓

**4. Where and when was Pratap Singh executed after his Kullu revolt failed?**

**A.** Dharamsala, on 3 August 1857

**B.** Delhi, on 20 September 1857

**C.** Shimla, on 15 August 1857

**D.** Kullu, on 1 June 1857

See answer ↓

**5. In 1846 Kullu passed to the British after which event?**

**A.** The end of the First Anglo-Sikh War

**B.** The Revolt of 1857

**C.** The Second Anglo-Mysore War

**D.** The Third Battle of Panipat

See answer ↓

**6. Which ruler of Rampur Bushahr refused to pay the customary tribute to the British in 1857?**

**A.** Raja Ajit Singh

**B.** Raja Shamsher Singh

**C.** Raja Jagat Singh

**D.** Raja Man Singh

See answer ↓

**7. Which sepoy leader plotted an attack on Simla from Kasauli and Jutogh in 1857?**

**A.** Kunwar Singh

**B.** Subedar Bhim Singh

**C.** Subedar Vir Singh

**D.** Bakht Khan

See answer ↓

**8. Which Kullu ruler moved the capital from Naggar to Sultanpur in the 17th century?**

**A.** Raja Jagat Singh

**B.** Raja Ajit Singh

**C.** Raja Sidh Singh

**D.** Raja Man Singh

See answer ↓

# Answer Key

1. **B.** He led the revolt in Kullu, a Himalayan hill state in present-day Himachal Pradesh. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** The Negi of the Seraj region supported his uprising against British rule. ↑ Q2
3. **D.** He was arrested along with his companion, Vir Singh, and both were later executed together. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** He and his companion, Vir Singh, were hanged at Dharamsala on 3 August 1857. ↑ Q4
5. **A.** Kullu was ceded by the Sikh state to the British in 1846. It then became part of the British-run Kangra district. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** Shamsher Singh of Bushahr refused to pay nazrana. He nearly provoked British action but did not join the revolt. ↑ Q6
7. **B.** Subedar Bhim Singh led sepoys who looted a treasury and burned a police station. The plot failed after informers leaked it. ↑ Q7
8. **A.** Raja Jagat Singh moved the capital to Sultanpur, within today's Kullu town. He also brought the Raghunath image there. ↑ Q8

## Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3

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