

Lecture-16



The Revolt of 1857

Causes of The Revolt

Political Cause

- **British policy of expansion:** The political causes of the revolt were the British policy of expansion through the **Doctrine of Lapse** and direct annexation.
- A large number of Indian rulers and chiefs were dislodged, thus arousing fear in the minds of other ruling families who apprehended a similar fate.
 - **Rani Lakshmi Bai's** adopted son was not permitted to sit on the throne of Jhansi.
 - Satara, Nagpur and Jhansi were annexed under the **Doctrine of Lapse**.
 - Jaitpur, Sambalpur and Udaipur were also annexed.
 - The annexation of Awadh by Lord Dalhousie on the pretext of maladministration left thousands of nobles, officials, retainers and soldiers jobless. This measure converted Awadh, a loyal state, into a hotbed of discontent and intrigue.

Social and Religious Cause

- The rapidly **spreading Western Civilisation** in India was alarming concerns all over the country.
 - An act in 1850 changed the Hindu law of inheritance enabling a Hindu who had converted into Christianity to inherit his ancestral properties.
 - The people were convinced that the Government was planning to **convert Indians to Christianity**.
- The **abolition of practices like sati and female infanticide**, and the legislation legalizing widow remarriage, were believed as threats to the established social structure.

- Introducing **western methods of education** was directly challenging the orthodoxy for Hindus as well as Muslims
- Even the introduction of the railways and telegraph was viewed with suspicion.

Economic Cause

- In rural areas, peasants and zamindars were infuriated by the **heavy taxes on land** and the **stringent methods of revenue collection** followed by the Company.
 - Many among these groups were unable to meet the heavy revenue demands and repay their loans to money lenders, eventually losing the lands that they had held for generations.
- Large numbers of **sepoys belonged to the peasantry class** and had family ties in villages, so the grievances of the peasants also affected them.
- After the Industrial Revolution in England, there was an **influx of British manufactured goods** into India, which ruined industries, particularly the textile industry of India.
 - Indian handicraft industries had to compete with cheap machine-made goods from Britain.

Military Causes

- The Revolt of 1857 began as a **sepoy mutiny**:
 - Indian sepoys formed more than 87% of the British troops in India but were considered inferior to British soldiers.
 - An Indian sepoy was paid less than a European sepoy of the same rank.
- They were required to serve in areas far away from their homes.

- In 1856 Lord Canning issued the General Services Enlistment Act which required that the sepoys must be ready to serve even in British land across the sea.

Immediate Cause

- The Revolt of 1857 eventually broke out over the **incident of greased cartridges**.
 - A rumour spread that the cartridges of the new enfield rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs.
 - Before loading these rifles the sepoys had to bite off the paper on the cartridges.
 - Both Hindu and Muslim sepoys refused to use them.
- Lord Canning tried to make amends for the error and the offending cartridges were withdrawn but the damage had already been done. There was unrest in several places.
- In March 1857, **Mangal Pandey**, a sepoy in **Barrackpore**, had refused to use the cartridge and attacked his senior officers.
 - He was hanged to death on 8th April.
 - On 9th May, 85 soldiers in Meerut refused to use the new rifle and were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:

1. Consider the following statements related to the cause of the 1857 revolt and select the right one.

- A. It was a great disparity in salaries between the Indian and European soldiers.
- B. The Indian sepoys were treated with contempt by their European officers.
- C. The sepoys were sent to distant parts of the empire but were not paid any extra allowance.
- D. All the above

Ans. D

2. Which of the following is one of the social reasons for 1857 revolt?

- A. The English could not establish any social relationship with the Indians.

- B. The racial arrogance of the British created a difference between the rulers and the ruled.
- C. Both A & B
- D. The company's trade policy destroyed Indian handicrafts.

Ans. C

3. Which of the following leader associated with Barout in Uttar Pradesh during the 1857 revolts?

- A. Shah Mal
- B. Maulavi Ahamadullah Shah
- C. Tatya Tope
- D. Veer Kuwar Singh

Ans. A

4. Who among the following British Officials suppressed the Revolt of Jhansi?

- A. Colin Campbell,
- B. Henry Havelock
- C. Henry Lawrence
- D. Hugh Rose

Ans. C

5. Consider the following statement (s) related to the administrative causes of the 1857 revolt and select the correct one.

- A. Deprivation of the traditional ruling classes of their luxury due to the establishment of the company's suzerainty over the Indian states;
- B. Introduction of new and revenue system which snatched the land from cultivator and gave it to the moneylender or traitor.
- C. Lord Canning's announcement to that Mughals would lose the title of King and be mere Princess.
- D. None of the above

Ans. C