



Revolt of 1857

The uprising(বিদ্রোহ) of 1857 forms one of the most important chapters in the history of the struggle of the Indian people for liberation from the British rule.

□ Background

The Sepoy Mutiny (বিদ্রোহ) (1857), also commonly known as the Indian Rebellion (First War of Independence) , among older generation of nationalist historians, was an armed uprising that began in locally raised units of the East India Company's Bengal Army (the other two armies of the East India Company were the Madras Army and the Bombay Army).

□ Nature of the event

Historians have held divergent views about the nature of the event. It has been described as a “**Mutiny**” confined to the army which did not have the command over the people in any manner. Many others described it as a **religious war against the Christians**. Some Indian nationalists have called it a well planned national struggle and as the **first war of Indian Independence**.

Causes of the Revolt

Political Causes

Lord Dalhousie was the Governor-General of India till 1848-1856. Under him the British followed an colonial (সম্প্রসারণবাদী) policy in India. Dalhousie through his policies had added considerable territories to the British Empire in India. The **policy of annexation (দখল/আত্মসাৎ)** reached its climax when he implemented the policy of **Doctrine of**

Lapse and annexed the Indian states on charges of **mis-governance** (অপশাসন) এবং **absence of an heir** (উত্তরাধিকারীর অনুপস্থিতি). In the course of eight years Dalhousie annexed Satara (1848), Sambhalpur (1850), Jhansi (1853), Nagpur (1853), Jaipur (1849) and Bhagat (1850).

Economic Causes:

The economic policy of the British adversely affected every section of the Indian society.

- The British exploited (শোষণ) the economic resources of India to their advantage and drained her (India) wealth by crippling (পঙ্গু) the Indian trade and industry.
 - Under the British, India turned into a colonial economy to serve the British .
 - Indian resources were exported to London to promote British industries.
 - Consequently, the country was turned to poverty as traditional handicrafts and industries were ruined (ফলস্বরূপ, ঐতিহ্যবাহী হস্তশিল্প ও শিল্প ধ্বংস হয়ে যাওয়ায় দেশটি দারিদ্র্যের কবলে পড়ে)।
 - Many people became jobless and there was overcrowding in the agrarian (কৃষি) sector. Further the high revenue (রাজস্ব) demand crippled the agrarian sector. Both the peasants (কৃষক) and the zamindars were pushed by the British to produce more for the maximum revenue.
 - The various revenue settlements were designed to benefit the government and displayed total disregard for the cultivators.
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Social and Religious Causes:

The British looked down upon the Indians as inferior (নিকৃষ্ট) race —

- The British discriminated them racially at every step. This racial arrogance of the British hurt the Indian masses most and they began to regard the Englishmen as their worst enemies.
- The Indians were not allowed at many places such as railway compartments and public places as parks and hotels as these were specially reserved for the Englishmen.

- The social legislations(আইন) on the evils as sati (সতীদাহ), infanticide (শিশুহত্যা), re-marriage of widows (বিধবাদের পুনঃবিবাহ), etc. were considered as interference in the religious matters of Indians about which the Englishmen knew nothing.
- the Indians also alarmed and feared the following practices—
 1. The introduction of English education
 2. The publicity of the work of the Christian missionaries
 3. Changing of the Hindu law of property
 4. conversion Hindus to Christianity

as these would upset the social and religious order of the traditional Indian society

Military Causes:

There was great inequality in treatment between the Indian and the British in terms of salary and other benefits—

- There was also a difference in numbers between the Indian and European troops . European troops numbered far less than the Indians. **Majority of the Indian soldiers were sent to Crimea, China and Iran to fight wars of the English.**
- The Indian soldiers were **considered inferior and were ill-treated by high officers.** The high ranks in the army were reserved for the Englishmen and the Indians were deliberately(icchakrito vabe) excluded from responsible positions.
- What hurt the Indian soldiers most was the **prohibition to wear caste and religious marks** while serving .It was considered interference in their personal affairs by the British.

The immediate cause of the revolt was the introduction of the new Enfield rifle and the greased cartridge. In loading the rifle, the sepoy before inserting the cartridge had to bite off its top. It was believed that the grease was made out of the fats of cows and pigs. This was objectionable to the Hindus and Muslims alike. This rumour made Indians against the British in the form of the revolt.

The first sign of unrest appeared in 1857 at Barrackpore in Bengal. **A sepoy, Mangal Pandey on 29th March 1857, killed senior officers on parade and started the revolt.**

End of the Revolt

The British government came out with all the powers to suppress (দমন করা) the revolt. The sepoys fought the battle with their limited strength for **four months**. Then, the sepoys had to retreat (পিছিয়ে আসা). On 25th September British troops (সৈন্য) regained Delhi. In addition, the Rebellion generated interest in Britain, where ordinary citizens followed its events and prompted some historians to call it Britain's first 'national-popular' war.

This historic event was the first large scale uprising in its kind against British rule in India. This rebellion (বিদ্রোহ) marked the end of the old style monarchies and introduced a new idea of nationalism among many Indians.
