

Today I will be speaking on the Military causes for the Revolt of 1857. I will be speaking on the 5th module of this course. The outline of the module. Here I will be giving a short introduction on the revolt of 1857 and then I will be listing the main military causes responsible for the Revolt so I will be speaking upon the main causes such as low pay, no promotion, how the soldiers were ill treated by the British, about the General Service Enlistment Act, faulty distribution of the troops, the larger proportion of Indians in the army, how the soldiers were deprived of the allowances, the activities of the missionaries and the immediate cause for the revolt of 1857.

At the end of the session, a student will understand the grievances of the sepoys against the company's administration. The students will also learn that it was the first major struggle of the Indians for the Freedom from the British rule.

The military causes responsible for the revolt of 1857. The revolt of 1857 was a culmination of large scale discontentment that had been accumulating in India for a long time against the policies of the British. A powerful struggle

against British imperialism grew in the later half of the 19th century. It was as early as 1856 that the Madras army had revolted, as they were not allowed to wear caste marks on their forehead. In 1824, the soldiers at Barrackpore had revolted, as they were compelled to cross the sea and go to fight in Burma. To the religious Hindu crossing the sea meant loss of their caste. They were also not given promotions. The Highest Pay that a Subehdar of an infantry got was less than the minimum pay of a raw European recruit.

All the higher positions were reserved for the British, irrespective of their performance. A sepoy in the infantry got rupees 7 a month, a Savar in the cavalry was paid rupees 27, out of which he had to pay for his own uniform food and upkeep of his horse, and ultimately he was left with only ₹1 or two for himself.

There was also ill treatment of the soldiers.,Despite the fact that the Indian soldiers were efficient, they were poorly paid, ill, fed, and badly housed. The British often used to treat the soldiers with contempt, and they were often cursed and abused, thus showing total disregard for the sentiments of the sepoys..

Another cause for the revolt was the passing of the General

Service Enlistment Act by the British . According to the traditional belief, it was taboo for the brahmins to cross the Seas.

The British Parliament passed the General Service Enlistment Act in 1856 which decreed that the Indian soldiers could be sent overseas on duty.

To cross the Kala Pani was pollution to the Orthodox Hindus who saw it as a danger to their caste which created resentment among the soldiers.

Another cause was the faulty distribution of the troops.

Places of strategic importance like Delhi, Allahabad was held wholly by the Indian soldiers. Besides, since England was engaged in fighting wars like the Crimean war, the Persian War, the Indian soldiers were of the opinion that the safety of her Indian Empire depended on them. They were therefore determined to rise up against the British.

Larger proportion of Indians in the British Army was another cause. In 1856 the company's troops, comprised of two lakh 38,000 Indians and forty thousand 532 British soldiers .Due to the Cremean War, many British soldiers were sent to fight the Russians. This further made the ratio almost one used to 8 which

gave the Indian self confidence to take advantage of the poor numerical strength of the British. Another cause for the revolt was that the sepoy were denied allowances. The Sepoys were denied Bhatta or foreign service allowance, which was given to them to serve in areas away from their homes. The Post Office Act of 1854 withdrew the privilege of free postage enjoyed by the sepoy.

Another cause was almost every agricultural family of Avadh had a representative in the Army. There were 75 thousand soldiers from Avadh and they did not like the fact that Avadh

Was annexed by Lord Dalhousie in his doctrine of lapse.. Another cause for the sepoy to revolt was the activities of the missionaries. There were fears among the soldiers that the British were bent on destroying their religion. Better incentives were given to the soldiers who converted. No sepoy could refuse to fight overseas.

For example, a soldier who had gone to Afghanistan was excommunicated when he returned back.

The immediate cause for the revolt of 1857 was the introduction of the Enfield Rifles in 1856. The British authorities introduced the Enfield Rifles. The loading

process of the Enfield rifles involved removing the top of the cartridge by the mouth before loading it into the rifle.

A rumour was also spread that the cartridges were greased with the fat of the cows and the pigs.

They believed that the British were attempting to destroy their religion of the people, as the Hindus used to revere the cow and the pig was taboo for the Muslims. Both the Hindus and the Muslim soldiers refused to use the cartridges as they feared that it would lead to the loss of their caste and their religion.

The revolt of 1857 started with Mangal Pandey, who was a sepoy who led an attack on the 34th native infantry on 29th of

March 1857. Because of this, he was executed and on May 11th,

soldiers from Meerut marched to the Red Fort and proclaimed

Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor as their leader. Thus began the revolt of 1857.

The books that I have referred to are CS Chabra Advance study in the history of modern India and Bipin Chandra's Struggle for independence.

Thank you.