

Chapter-1

The First War of Independence, 1857

- Causes of the Uprising of 1857 A.D:

- a) Political Causes
- b) Socio-Religious Causes
- c) Economic Causes
- d) Military Causes
- e) Immediate Cause

Political Causes of the Uprising of 1857 A.D

- a) Subsidiary Alliance: The doctrine of Subsidiary Alliance was introduced by Lord Richard Wellesley in 1798.

Main Principals:

- a) Any Indian ruler accepting the subsidiary alliance with the East India Company had to keep the British Army within their territory and was supposed to pay for its maintenance.
- b) In lieu of the payments, some of the States Territory was ceded to the British.
- c) The ruler was forced to keep a British official at the court called 'Resident'.

States Conquered by the British through this policy: Hyderabad, Gwalior, Indore, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Oudh.

- b) Doctrine of Lapse: The doctrine of Lapse was introduced by Lord Dalhousie.

Main Principals:

- a) If an Indian ruler of a dependent State did not have his real son to succeed him, he was not allowed to adopt a successor without the Company's consent.
- b) Heirs adopted without the consent of the company could neither inherit the throne nor the title.
- c) They could inherit only the private property of the deceased ruler.

States Conquered by the British through this policy: Satara, Nagpur, Jhansi and several small principalities.

- c) Direct Conquest : By this policy Sindh was annexed in 1843 A.D. and Punjab was annexed in 1849 to the Company's domain.

- d) Unjust Annexation of Awadh : In 1856, Lord Dalhousie annexed Awadh on the pretext of maladministration by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah who was sent to Calcutta (Kolkata) on a pension of Rs. 12 lakh per annum.

- e) Unfair attitude towards the Mughal Emperor:

- a) Lord Dalhousie declared that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zaffar, the emperor and his successors would have to leave the royal palace i.e. the Red Fort.
- b) Later, Lord Canning, the next Governor General announced in 1856 A.D. that Bahadur Shah's successors would not be allowed even to use the title of a 'King'.

- f) Unpopular Administration of the Company:

- a) The British officers were very arrogant and had contempt for the Indians.
- b) They were not easily approachable.
- c) Indians were not appointed on high posts in administration.
- d) The English officials had little knowledge of people's customs.
- e) Indians were not contented with the judicial system of the British.

- g) **India governed from a foreign land:** India was administered by the British while sitting at a distance of thousands of miles away.
- h) **Stopping the Pension of Nana Sahib:**
 - a) Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the Peshwa Baji Rao II, was denied his pension on the grounds that he was not a natural born heir.
 - b) He was also not allowed to ascend the throne.
 - c) This hurt the sentiments of the Hindu subjects of the Peshwas.

Socio-Religious Causes of the Uprising of 1857 A.D

- I. **Fear of Mass Conversion:** Many activities of the Christian Missionaries created panic among the masses that they would all be converted to Christianity.
 - a) The teaching of the Christian doctrine was made compulsory in the schools set up by the Christian Missionaries.
 - b) The missionaries openly and everywhere condemned the Hindu scriptures, idol worship and Hindu and Muslim doctrines and customs.
 - c) Many temptations were offered to make conversion by giving the Indians bribes, promotions and rewards.
 - d) The study of Bible was introduced in government schools.
 - e) Police force was used for converting people to Christianity.
 - f) Orphans and victims of calamities were often converted to Christianity.
 - g) Land belonging to temples or mosques was taxed.
- II. **The laws that interfered with the religious customs of th people:** The laws are as follows:
 - a) **General Service Enlistment Act of 1856:**
 - a) Under this Act, new recruits were required to serve anywhere in India or overseas.
 - b) This caused a great alarm amongst the Indian soldiers as according to the Hindu customs, crossing the sea was contrary to their religion.
 - b) **The Religious Incompetence Law (Religious Disabilities Act) of 1850:**
 - a) According to this law, if a person belonging to the Hindu religion changed his religion, he could remain the heir of his ancestral property.
 - b) The law was enacted to promote the conversion of Hindus to Christianity.
 - c) **Widow Remarriage Act of 1856:**
 - a) Widow Remarriage Act legalized the widow remarriage.
 - b) This was also not liked by the orthodox Hindus who favoured Sati.
 - d) **Other Prohibitions:**
 - a) The British government had also prohibited the Sati System, female infanticide and child marriage.
 - b) All these measures were not liked by the common people.
- III. **Introduction of Railways and Telegraphs:**
 - a) It meant to the Indians that the people from lower castes, including the so-called untouchables would sit in the same compartments and buy their tickets from the same window as people of the superior castes including the Brahmins.
 - b) The orthodox section considered it an attempt to interfere in the caste structure of its society and defile its religion.

- c) There was also a rumour that telegraph poles would be used for hanging people who were reluctant to embrace Christianity.

IV. Fear of English Education:

- a) Christian missionaries and Government schools introduced the teaching of English in their institutions particularly after 1833.
- b) This implied the shifting of emphasis from oriental learning (Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic and Urdu) to western learning.
- c) The Pandits and Mullahs resented this change as they saw in it an attempt to discourage the study of Islamic and Hindu literatures.

V. General Indignities hurled upon Indians:

- a) The English hurled insults and indignities upon the Indians.
- b) They could even kill them without fear of punishment under law.
- c) The Indians were supposed to salute an Englishman or dismount from their horse till the Englishman passed from the sight.
- d) Special railway compartments, hotels and clubs were reserved for Europeans only.
- e) These hurt the self-respect of the Indians.

Economic Causes of the Uprising of 1857 A.D

I. The ruin of Indian Trade and Handicrafts:

- a) The British imposed heavy export duty on silk and cotton textile.
- b) British goods were imported into India without any duty or at a very nominal duty.
- c) British manufacturers flooded the Indian market with machine-made goods. Indians weavers and producers failed to compete with them.
- d) The British traders got many privileges and facilities as compared to the Indian traders.
- e) The art of spinning and weaving which employed thousands of workers in India became extinct.

II. Impoverishment of Peasants:

- a) Through the Permanent Settlement of 1793 A.D. the Zaminders were supposed to collect the land revenue.
- b) The Zaminders were authorized to eject a peasant for the non-payment of revenue.
- c) In the South, the British revenue collectors were even more harsh towards the peasants.
- d) They claimed more than half the produce as land revenue.
- e) British goods were imported into India without any duty or at a very nominal duty.
- f) The poor cultivator was forced to borrow money from the landlord or moneylender at a heavy rate of interest.

III. India was converted into an Agricultural Colony:

- a) The British Industrialists saw a rich source in India to provide them with raw materials for their industries.
- b) Bengal, Bihar and Awadh became major producers of export crops such as jute, opium, indigo, cotton and oilseeds.
- c) Only such crops as were required in England were allowed to be produced in India.
- d) Thus, India's own indigenous agro-industries were ruined under a well-planned British policy.

IV. Ill-treatment of Indigo-cultivators:

- a) Indigo was required by cloth manufacturers to dye clothes.
- b) Commercial agents and officials of the Company began investing in indigo production.
- c) They forced the peasants to produce only indigo.
- d) Most of the cultivators were in a debt trap.
- e) The price they got for the indigo they produced was very low and the cycle of loans never ended.

V. Confiscation of Estates:

- a) The Inam Commission appointed in 1852 A.D. asked the owners of large landed-estates to show the papers/documents of title-deeds as proof of their ownership.
- b) Many of them could not produce these documents.
- c) With the passage of time the Company's Government confiscated about 20 thousand landed-estates of the Taluqdars.
- d) This causes a great resentment in the landed gentry.

VI. Loss of Employment:

- a) Lakhs of artisans and craftsmen lost their livelihood due to the ruin of their industries which was the result of British export-import policies.
- b) Annexation of Awadh and other Princely States rendered their soldiers jobless because they were disbanded by the British.
- c) With the introduction of English education, thousands of Pandits and Maulvis lost their work.

VII. Drain of Indian Wealth to England: Dadabhai Naoraji described in his book "Poverty and Un-British Rule in India" how the English Company and her officials carried away Indian's wealth to England through various ways as follows:

- a) The Company paid £ 400 lakhs annually to the British Government in England.
- b) Salaries payable to the members of the 'Indian council' in England.
- c) By paying high salaries to the British officials in civil and military administration, they sent a large portion of their salaries home as savings.
- d) Pensions paid to British Officials on retirement.
- e) The Company officials collected huge wealth through interest on debts, bribes and gifts from Indian rulers, businessmen and others, which they carried away with them on return to England.
- f) In these ways, India was impoverished by the British.

Military Causes of the Uprising of 1857 A.D

I. Meagre British Troops in India:

- a) The ratio between the British soldiers and Indian Soldiers was very low.
- b) This encouraged the sepoys(soldiers) to take up arms in 1857 A.D.

II. Higher Jobs and Salaries to the Englishmen in the Army:

- a) The Indian soldiers were not given a rank higher than that of a Subedar.
- b) All higher ranks were reserved for the Englishmen.
- c) The English soldiers also paid higher salaries than the Indian soldiers.

III. Ill-treating the Indian Troops:

- a) The British officers treated the Indian Troops as menial servants, inferior to their English masters.

- b) They forbade the sepoys from wearing caste or sectarian marks, beards or turbans.
- c) The English kept them at a distance in official and social life.
- d) This hurt the Indian soldiers.

IV. General Service Enlistment Act:

- a) This act was passed in 1856 A.D. by Lord Canning, then Governor General of India.
- b) As per the Act, all recruits to the Bengal Army could be sent anywhere for service, within or outside India.
- c) This caused great alarm amongst the soldiers of the Bengal Army.
- d) The crossing the sea was contrary to their religion.
- e) The Indian soldiers were not even paid any extra allowances (Bhatta) for service outside India.

V. Defeat of British Troops in the First Afghan War:

- a) The British lost the First Afghan War.
- b) This exposed the British weakness.
- c) The Indian troops gained confidence to be able to challenge the British in India too.

VI. Postage Office Act, 1854:

- a) Indian soldiers used to send letters to their homes free of cost.
- b) But in 1854, under the new act, they were deprived of that right.

Immediate Causes of the Uprising of 1857 A.D

• **A short note on immediate cause:**

- a) In January 1857 A.D., the British introduced Enfield Rifle in the Bengal Army.
- b) Greased cartridges were to be used in this Rifle.
- c) The soldiers had to bite the end of the cartridge with their mouth before using it.
- d) The Cartridges were believed to be greased with the fat of cow or pig.
- e) The Sepoys felt that it was an attempt to defile both the Hindu and the Muslim religions.
- f) The news of the polluted cartridges spread to all military stations causing general resentment among the Indian soldiers.

Consequences of the Uprising of 1857 A.D

I. Changes in the administrative set up (Constitutional Changes):

- a) The rule of the East India Company came to an end.
- b) The Indian empire went under the direct control of the Crown.
- c) Queen Victoria became the 'Queen of India' under the 'Government of India Act of 1858.
- d) The Board of Control was abolished and henceforth the power was to be exercised by the Secretary of State for India aided by a Council.
- e) The Secretary of State was to be assisted by a 15-member. Out of these, nine should have resided or served in India for at least 10 years.
- f) The post of the Governor General was to be known as the title of Viceroy or Crown's personal representative.
- g) Appointments to the Civil Service were to be made by open competition.
- h) The Civil Service examination was to be held in London.
- i) The Indian University Act set up Universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

II. Queen's Proclamation of 1858 : On November 1, 1858 Lord Canning announced the proclamation to the Princes, Chiefs and People of India are as follows:

- a) The British Government would not annex the Indian States.
- b) All the treaties that the Princes had concluded with the East India Company would be honoured.
- c) The 'Doctrine of Lapse' was abandoned and the right to adoption was recognized.
- d) The office of Peshwa was abolished.

III. End of Peshwas and the Mughal Empire:

- a) Nana Sahib, the Peshwa had fled to the Jungles of Nepal and he never returned.
- b) The title of Peshwa was abolished.
- c) Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor, was deported to Rangoon where he died after sometime.
- d) After his death, the Mughal Dynasty founded by Babur came to an end.

IV. Promises to the People by Queen Victoria:

- a) Not to interfere in the social and religious beliefs of the people.
- b) To give equal treatment to all her subjects both Indians and Europeans.
- c) To admit Indians to all offices without discrimination of caste or race.
- d) To grant general pardon to all except those found guilty of murdering an Englishman during the uprising.
- e) To make moral and material advancement of the people as the main concern of the government policies.
- f) To develop industries and promote works of public utility.

V. Changes in the Army Organisation:

- a) A Royal Indian army was created merging the armies of the Company and the Crown under a Commander-in-Chief.
- b) The ratio of Europeans and Indians in the army was rearranged respectively to 1 : 2 (in Bengal) and 2 : 5 (in Bombay and Madras).
- c) The Indian soldiers were to be excluded from the artillery and arsenals.
- d) Supply of newspapers and magazines to the armies were stopped.
- e) A distinction was made between martial and non-martial soldiers.
- f) The sepoys belonging to different castes and creeds were mixed up in the same regiment, so that a sense of unity in them may not develop.
- g) All key positions in the army were reserved for the British.
- h) Indians in the army were not to be appointed at a rank higher than that of a Subedar.

VI. Introduction of New Budget System:

- a) From 1860 A.D. onwards, the Budget system was introduced in India for the first time in order to reorganize the financial administration.

VII. The Policy of Divide and Rule :

- a) Soon after the War of 1857 A.D., the government turned against the Muslims and discriminated against them in services, favouring the Hindus. When later on the Hindu nationalism grew, they became friendly towards the Muslims.
- b) They encouraged the formation of the Muslim League in 1906 A.D. and introduced a separate electorate for the Muslims in 1909 A.D.
- c) To create a wall of separation between the feudal elements (the Princes, Landlords, Zamindars), the common people and the peasantry, the British assured the Princes to end the policy of annexation.

d) They gave gifts of land to the landlords who began to exploit the peasantry in several ways.

VIII. Increased Economic Exploitation of India:

- a) The high salaries of the secretary of the state for India and other members of the Indian Council in England were paid from the Indian exchequer.
- b) India became an 'Imperial Colony of Britain', exporting raw materials and importing finished goods from England.
- c) Imbalance in Export and Import duties caused the ruin of India's economy.
- d) There was a rapid rise in the indebtedness of the peasantry to the landlords.
- e) The English invested their capital and savings in India on the Indian Railways, plantation, coal mines, Jute mills and shipping etc. India had to pay a heavy dividend on these investments.

IX. British Apathy towards Social Reforms:

- a) The social reforms done by the British had been misunderstood and had become one of the factors responsible for the First War of Independence of 1857 A.D.
- b) That's why the British had now become apathetic towards social reforms in India.

X. Rise of Nationalism in India:

- a) The British committed great atrocities on Indians in the First War of Independence of 1857 A.D. These were never forgotten by the people.
- b) Moreover, the stories of sufferings and sacrifices of national heroes of 1857 A.D. like Tantiya Tope, Rani of Jhansi who became 'India's Joan of Arc'.