

1857 REVOLT MILITARY CAUSES



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MILITARY CAUSES



- Several factors contributed to the change in the attitude of the Indian soldiers towards the Company. These included the following:

MILITARY CAUSES



- Ill-treatment of Indian soldiers
- General Service Enlistment Act
- Larger Proportion of Indians in the British Army
- Bleak Prospects of Promotions
- Deprivation of Allowances
- Faulty Distribution of Troops
- Poor Performance of British Troops
- Lower Salaries

Ill-treatment of Indian soldiers



- The East India Company established the **British Empire** in India with the help of **Indian soldiers**.
- Despite the fact that **Indian soldiers** were as efficient as their British counterparts, they were **poorly paid, ill-fed and badly housed**.
- British military authorities forbade the sepoys from wearing caste or sectarian marks, beards or turbans; and they showed **disregard for the sentiments of the sepoys**.

General Service Enlistment Act



- According to traditional belief, it was a forbidden for a Brahmin to cross the seas.
- The British Parliament passed the **General Service Enlistment Act in 1856.**
- As per this Act, **Indian soldiers could be sent overseas on duty.**
- The Act did not take into account the sentiment of the **Indian soldiers.**
- The Brahmin soldiers saw in this a danger to their caste.
- This led to a feeling of **resentment among them**

Larger Proportion of Indians in the British Army



- In 1856 the Company's troops comprised 2,38,000 Indians and 45,322 British soldiers.
- Dalhousie had recommended that more British soldiers should be recruited in the army.
- This could not come through. Thus, it made it easier for the large number of Indian soldiers to take up arms against the British

Bleak Prospects of Promotions



- All higher positions in employment were reserved for the British, irrespective of their performance.
- Even the Indian soldiers formerly occupying high positions in the armies of native princes could not rise above the rank of a *Subedar*.
- The future of the Indian soldiers was bleak without chances of promotions.

Deprivation of Allowances



- The **extension of British dominion** in India adversely affected the service conditions of **the sepoys**.
- They were required to serve in areas away from their homes without extra payment and additional *Bhatta* (foreign service allowance).
- The *Post Office Act of 1854* withdrew the privilege of free postage enjoyed by sepoys.

Faulty Distribution of Troops



- **Places of strategic importance** like Delhi and Allahabad had **no British armies** and were wholly held by the **Indian soldiers**.
- Besides, England was engaged in several wars outside India, *e.g.*, **the Persian (Iranian) War, the Crimean War and the Chinese War**.
- Indian soldiers had the feeling that the British were in difficulty and **the safety of her Indian empire depended on them**.
- They were, therefore, determined to strike at them at a suitable time.

Poor Performance of British Troops



- The **British** army suffered major reverses in the First Afghan War (1838-42), in the Punjab Wars (1845-49) and in the Crimean War (1854-56).
- In 1855-56, the *Santhal tribesmen of Bihar and Bengal armed with axes and bows rose up against the British, temporarily sweeping away the British rule from their area.*
- Though the British suppressed the Santhal Uprising, the disasters they suffered broke the myth that the British were invincible.
- It further revealed to the Indian soldiers that the British army could be defeated by the determined Indian army.

Lower Salaries



- The wages of the Indian soldiers were inadequate to support their families.
- On the other hand, the British soldiers received more than eight times the salary of the Indian soldiers

MILITARY CAUSES IN SHORT



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IMMEDIATE CAUSE

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- In 1856 the new Enfield rifle had been introduced in the army by the British authorities
- Its cartridges had a greased paper cover whose end had to be bitten off before the cartridge was loaded into the rifle.
- The loading process of the Enfield rifle involved bringing the cartridge to the mouth and biting off the top greased paper with the mouth.

IMMEDIATE CAUSE



- In January 1857, there was a rumour in the Bengal regiments that the greased cartridge had the fat of cow or pig.
- The grease was in some instances composed of beef and pig fat.
- The sepoy's were now convinced that the introduction of greased cartridges was a deliberate move to defile Hindu and Muslim religions as the cow is *sacred* to Hindus and the pig is a *forbidden* to Muslims.

IMMEDIATE CAUSE



- The sepoy, Hindu as well as Muslim, were enraged. The use of the greased cartridges would endanger their religion.
- Many of them believed that the Government was deliberately trying to destroy their religion.
- So, both the Hindus and the Muslim soldiers refused to use these cartridges and staged an uprising when they were forced to use them.



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