

Question

What were the causes of war of Independence

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⇒ Conclusion

⇒ Introduction:-

War of Independence or Indian mutiny against British East India Company erupted on a military affair but it converted into a widespread war of independence. There were many causes due to which not only military but people and nobles also were part of this war. These causes can be divided into political, economic, military and religious issues, because according to **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan** in his treatise "**The Causes of Indian Revolt**" "A singular event can never become a cause of general uprising. The same was the case of with the uprising of 1857."

⇒ Political Causes:-

a Doctrine of Lapse:-

Lord Dalhousie introduced "Doctrine of Lapse" which stated that "The Adoption of an heir would not be recognized and that in case a ruler died issueless, his state would be annexed to The British Territories". This doctrine kicked out many nobles who were adopted by their adoptive parents. The main sufferers were "Dhondu Pant" better known as **Nana Sahib** who was adopted by the son of last "Peshwa", Rani of Thansi, **Lakshmi Bai**, whose adopted child was deprived of the right to succeed to the throne. Nana Sahib's pension was stopped when his father Baji Rao was died in 1851. The company told that his "Fogis of Bithur" would be seized at any moment. So, he stood

against British in war of independence.

b. Mistreatment of Mughal Emperor:

The British established their firm grip over all the regions of India. The old authority of Mughals had already vanished but British wanted to remove them from Red Fort. For this purpose, they started to impose some limitations and stopped the old style of writing letters to the Emperor in 1827. Then, the rule to give some formal respect to Emperor was given up. Lord Dalhousie stated that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, his heirs would have to vacate the Red Fort and would not be allowed to use the title of Emperor for themselves.

c. Lack of Indian Natives in civil Services:-

The Indian Civil Services was officially instituted through the **Charter Act of 1853**, and introduced merit-based competitive merit examination system. But its exams were conducted in England.

Mostly Britishers were selected to serve in India. After retirement they went back to their country. Till 1857, no Indian was selected as Indian Civil Services. First was **Satyendranath Tagore** in 1863. So, Native Indians had a sense of inferiority which compelled them to stand against injustice.

d. English As Official Language:-

Persian was official language in sub-continent due to mother tongue of Mughals. English replaced Persian and it was declared

as medium of instruction. Due to this, many well educated people were fell out from offices due to their unfamiliarity with English language. As a result, Literacy rate of sub continent decreased brutally.

⇒ Economic Causes

a. Extraction of Raw Material at Cheap Price :-

British mainly came in sub-continent for trade. They started to extract more material on cheap prices. They raised the growth of raw material by providing fresh water through canals and timely exported through railways. On the other hand, they extracted it and sent to England. The fine products were sold costly. People opposed the act of duplicity.

b. Increase in Current Account Deficit of India

In Mughal Dynasty, the economy of India was one of the greatest economy of the world. It's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was **42%** at that time, more than any developed countries of present time. Due to English as a national language, many people lost jobs. Unemployment was on peak and Britishers were extracting all the raw materials to export it in Britain and the refined product was imported on high rates. Due to that fluctuation, current Account Deficit of India was increased and British economy earned surplus value. Indians realised that danger and participated in war of independence to get rid from that system.

c. Heavy Taxes On Farming and Industries:-

The officials of company did not come to India with the intention of a permanent residence. They tried to raise their wealth by hook or by crook. They imposed taxes especially to the farmers.

According to **Skeldon**, "Silk of Bengal, which was bought at half the price of the French and Italian silk, soon flooded the markets of England". The British Government ruined the local industries by imposing heavy taxes on it. As a result, the export of Indian cloth which was ^{the} worth of 3645745 pounds in 1793 had been reduced to just 36151 pounds in 1849.

People were forced to abandon their profession and in many cases they had their thumbs cut off.

The Stamp Act also increased their economic hardships.

d- Corrupt Tax Collectors:-

Apart from heavy Taxes imposed by government, the tax collectors were also exploiting natives by demanding more Taxes of agricultural or industrial products.

As a result, poor's could not make both ends meet. Suicides and migration, auction of lands to pay debts and Taxes were common. These causes raised

insurgency in people. **As London Newspapers wrote,** "If. The

unrest is limited to the soldiers alone: and the people are on our side, we are at loss to understand as to why the Indian Government is sending Telegrams upon Telegrams for more and more reinforcements from Britain. If the general people is on our side, as is claimed by the ministers and directors of the company, they can easily find in India so many soldiers as to

form ten armies".

e- Low Salaries of Sepoys:-

There was a huge difference between the salaries and living standards of the Indian soldiers and their English counterparts. This injustice created an infinite hatred in the hearts of the local soldiers against their foreign officers. The Indian army consisted of **315520 men**, and in all, **9802235 pounds** were spent on them. Out of it, **5668110 pounds** were spent on English soldiers who were only **51316** in number. An Indian infantry soldier earned only **Rs.7** per month whereas a cavalry man got **Rs.27** per month. This discrimination had generated a great deal of unrest in the hearts of Indian soldiers.

⇒ Religious Causes:-

a. Conversion of Christianity

Although East India Company had allived in India for trade but it always regarded the propogation of Chilistianity as its foremost duty. For this purpose, they brought their Christian Missionaries who came to India in large numbers. They not only Propagate Christianity but also criticized the religions of local people. A priest named **E. Edmond** declared in an open letter in 1855 That since India had come under one government, it should also have only one religion i.e Christianity. In regions who were hit by famine, Their orphans were admitted into orphages^{na} where They were forcibly converted To Christianity, like in the orphages of **Sikandra during The famine of 1837**. In 1850, company passed a law stating that the change of religion would have no impact on inheritance.

In pride, The Hindu soldiers were prohibited to put "Tilak" on their forehead. As well as, Sikhs were bound^{not} to use "Safa" piece of cloth on their heads. These interventions in religion was the cause of mutiny.

b. British Ethnocentrism to Spread their culture:-

Like religion, British Government considered its responsibility to teach the local people. They had a sense of superiority over native people due to their language and colour.

A British boostly said, A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

British society regarded themselves as small oases of culture in a lally uncivilized world.

This arrogant attitude was not

acceptable to many Indians.

⇒ Military Causes:

a. Introduction of New Gun:

A new gun The Enfield Rifle, which was invented in 1852, was introduced in India in 1856. Its cartridges had greased shells. That grease was made of cow and pork fat. When this news spread, soldiers refused to use that gun. As a result, British Government sentenced that soldiers for ten years. This incident was the immediate outbreak of war.

b. Use of Indian Troops To Fight Abroad:-

The company officials ordered the Indian soldiers to go to the overseas war-fronts in world war

2. The Brahman Hindus felt it to be a direct interference in their religious affairs, because overseas voyages was considered to be a sin by the Orthodox Hindus.

⇒ Conclusion :

In short, the people were triggered by the political, economic, religious and military exploitation by the British Government.

Although the incident of cartridges was the immediate cause of war of independence, yet all these problems were erupting on ground level which became the movement against company. **Justice LaThey** said,

"The truth is that the peoples in most parts of Northern and North-western parts of India, had risen in revolt against the

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English domination. The cartidges affair was only a spark which found its way into this ammunition depot and ignited it. **It was indeed a religious and national war.**