



Chapter 10

Revolt of 1857-58

NOTES:

The Rebellion in the army and its spread

- **Why did Mangal Pandey rebel?**

Mangal Pandey rebelled against cartridges issued by the British government that were greased with fat from cows and pigs.

- On 24th April 1857, ninety men of 3rd Native Infantry stationed at Meerut refused to accept the greased cartridges.
- On 9th May eighty five of them were sentenced to ten years imprisonment but on 10th May, they were released by their fellow comrades after which they killed their officers and set off for Delhi.
- The sepoys after reaching Delhi proclaimed the aged Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II as the Emperor of India.
- The sepoy mutiny spread to different parts of India like Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Jhansi and Arrah in Bihar.
- Many rulers of the Indian states supported the mutiny like Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, Tantya Tope, Rani Lakshmi Bai and Kunwar Singh.

Political Causes

- One of the major causes of the rebellion was the declaration made by the British to abolish the title of the Mughal king according to which they had to leave Red Fort, the Mughal palace in Delhi.

Economic Causes

- The economic cause of the rebellion was the economic exploitation of the country by destroying the traditional economic fabric of India.

Social Causes

- The social cause was the fear of endangerment of the religions practiced in India due to activities of the Christian missionaries.

Military Causes

- The sepoys were paid less and no Indian soldier could become a staff officers.

Sepoy Mutinies

- In 1806 the sepoys at Vellore revolted in protest against the new regulations that required them to shave off their beard.
- In 1824, the sepoys at Barrackpore near Kolkata mutinied as they were not allowed to carry their individual cooking vessel during the 1st Anglo-Burmese war.
- In 1844, 1849 and 1850 the sepoys also mutinied because of the failure of the government in the non-payment of the extra allowances for serving in distant lands.

General Service Enlistment Act

- It was passed in July 1856, according to which all the sepoys were required to march wherever demanded.

Failure of the revolt

- **The major reason for the failure of the revolt was –**
- Most of the Indian rulers and big zamindars refused to join the revolt.
- The rebellion was short of modern weapons.
- There was disunity among the leaders.

Nature of the Revolt of 1857

- The rebellion enjoyed strong mass support but it cannot be described 'national', for national would entail a reaction to colonial rule in modernist terms. They did not have a viable alternative programme of action in case of overthrow of the colonial regime.