



1857 के स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के अनछुए पहलू एक विश्लेषण



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अनुक्रमणिका

भूमिका

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25.

1857 Revolt : Failure Factors

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Introduction

The factors which led to the onset of revolt is multifaceted. There were several religious, social, political and economic causes which had set into motion an atmosphere of general hatred towards the foreign government. However, the immediate factor which led to the outburst of the rebellion was the rumour about the cartilage of the Enfield Rifle being made out of cow and pig fat. The revolt started in Meerut, and from there spread like a fire engulfing almost all of North India. The revolt saw the soldiers, peasants and even many local rulers, princes and dispossessed Zamindars fight against what they called the firangi rule. However, after some initial setbacks, the Britishers brutally suppressed the revolt and swiftly regained all lost territories. There were many reasons for this. Firstly, the revolt lacked planning and unity. Even though there were a lot of localised rebellions spread over a wide area these were not coordinated or organised. There were local leaders but the

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revolt lacked a National level leader who could unite all the forces and use them effectively to the enemy's detriment. As opposed to this, the British troops were well organized and managed by talented leaders such as Havelock, Outram and Campbell. The Indian side was poorly trained and not well armed, whereas the highly disciplined British troops were armed to the teeth with weapons. In general, the organizational and military superiority of the British forces made it very easy for them to suppress the revolt. Secondly, Indian leaders did not have a common foresight or plan as to what they would do after the revolt ended. They had not placed much thought on how they would run the government after the Britishers was ousted. Thirdly, not all sections of Indian society participated in the revolt. The rebellion was limited to North India. The Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras did not take part in the revolt and neither did the Sikh soldiers. As a result of all these factors, the revolt of 1857 was easily suppressed.

Although the revolt of 1857 was an extraordinary event in the history of India, it had very little chance of success against an organized and powerful enemy. It was suppressed within a year of its outbreak. There were many causes which led to the collapse of this mighty rebellion.

Narrow Territorial Base

The revolt of 1857 had limited territorial spread. It was not widespread and remained confined to North and Central India only. Even in the north, Kashmir, Punjab, Sind and Rajputana kept away from the rebels. The British managed to get the loyalty of the Madras and Bombay regiments and the Sikh states. Afghans and Gurkhas also supported the British.

The eastern, western and southern parts of India were more or less unaffected by the uprising.

Lack of unity

No broad-based unity emerged among the Indian people during the rebel. While sepoy of the Bengal army were revolting, some soldiers in Punjab fought on the side of the British to crush these rebellions. Adhesion of the Mughal emperor, turned the Sikhs of Punjab away from the rebellion, as they did not want to return to Islamic rule, having fought

many wars against the Mughal rulers of the British. They acted as break-waters to storm Awadh Taluqdars also backed off, once promises were made by the British to restore their land and titles.

The modern educated Indians also did not support the revolt because, in their view, the revolt was backwards-looking. They believed mistakenly that the British would lead the country towards modernisation.

The main problem, however, was lack of unity in the ranks of rebels themselves. Their leaders were suspicious and jealous of each other and often indulged in petty quarrels. The Begam of Awadh, for example, quarrelled with Maulvi Ahmdullah, and the Mughal princes with the sepoy-generals. Thus, selfishness and narrow perspective of the leaders suppressed the strength of the revolt and prevented its consolidation.

Poorly organized

Another major factor contributing to the failure of the revolt was the weak leadership of the movement. Indian leaders lacked organization and planning. The rebels were poorly organized. The uprisings in different parts of the country were uncoordinated. Often the sepoys behaved in an uncontrolled manner.

The rebel leaders were no match for the British soldiers. Most of its leaders thought only of their own interest. They were motivated by narrow personal gains. They fought to liberate only their own territories.

No national leader emerged to coordinate the movement and give it purpose and direction. Rani Lakshmi Bai, Tantya Tope and Nana Saheb were courageous but were not good military generals. The rebels were lacking in discipline and a central command and they could not win against a powerful and determined enemy who planned its strategy skillfully.

Lack of Proper Arms and Equipment

The rebels were short of weapons and finances. Whatever few weapons existed, were old and outdated. In many areas, rebels fought with swords and spears which were no match for the sophisticated and modern weapons of the British.

The telegraphic system and postal communication helped the British to speed up their operation. The English mastery of the sea enabled them to get timely help from England and crush the revolt ruthlessly.

Lack of Unified Vision and Ideology

The rebellion swept off the British system of government and administration in India but the rebels did not know what to create in its place. They had no forward-looking plan in mind. The prominent leaders of rebellion like Nana Saheb, Begum of Awadh, Rani of Jhansi, etc., did not possess any unified programme.

For example, the sepoys of Bengal wanted to revive the ancient glories of the Mughals while Nana Saheb and Tantya Toppe tried to reestablish the Maratha power. Rani Lakshmi Bai fought to regain Jhansi, which she had lost as a result of the British policy of Doctrine of lapse.

There were diverse elements among the rebels with different ideology, plan and motive. Most of the leaders of the revolt were fighting for personal gains and lack a coherent idea for modern India. Modern nationalism had not yet evolved in India. In fact, it was a concept unknown to the people.

Conclusion

By the end of 1859, the revolt was suppressed and the British authority over India was firmly reestablished. The revolt had finally failed. However, the revolt is remembered for the valour and the courage of its rebels. Even though they failed to achieve their objective they succeeded in sowing the seeds of nationalism among the Indians and paved the way for the future struggle for independence. The revolt of 1857 was an unprecedented event in the history of British rule in India. It united, though in a limited way, many sections of Indian society for a common cause. Though the revolt failed to achieve the desired goal, it sowed the seeds of Indian nationalism.

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