

Unit-III Indian Army Under East India Company

Topic: 1.Origin and Development of Presidency armies

(I)Origins Bengal Army

The Bengal Army originated with the establishment of a European Regiment in 1756. While the East India Company had previously maintained a small force of Dutch and Eurasian mercenaries in Bengal, this was destroyed when Calcutta was captured by the Nawab of Bengal on 30 June that year.

Bengal troops in the 19th century (1840)

In 1757 the first locally recruited unit of Bengal sepoys was created in the form of the Lal Paltan battalion. It was recruited from Bengalis, Bhumihar, Bihari Rajputs and Pathan

oldiers that had served in the Nawab's Army from Bihar and the Awadh who were collectively called Purbiyas. Drilled and armed along British army lines this force served well at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and 20 more Indian battalions were raised by 1764. In 1766 the Monghyr Mutiny, quelled by Robert Clive, affected many of the white officers of the Bengal Army.

The EIC steadily expanded its Bengal Army and by 1796 the establishment was set at three battalions of European artillery, three regiments of European infantry, ten regiments of Indian cavalry and twelve regiments (each of two battalions) of Indian infantry.

In 1824 the Bengal Army underwent reorganisation, with the regular infantry being grouped into 68 single battalion regiments numbered according to their date of establishment. Nine additional infantry regiments were subsequently raised, though several existing units were disbanded between 1826 and 1843. On the eve of the First Afghan War (1839–42) the Bengal Army had achieved a dominant role in the forces of the HEIC. There were 74 battalions of Bengal regular infantry against only 52 from Madras, 26 from Bombay and 24 British. On average an inch and a half taller and a stone heavier than the southern Indian troops, the Bengal sepoy was highly regarded by a military establishment that tended to evaluate its soldiers by physical appearance.

A new feature in the Bengal Army was the creation of irregular infantry and cavalry regiments during the 1840s. Originally designated as "Local Infantry" these were permanently established units but with less formal drill and fewer British officers than the regular Bengal line regiments.

The main source of recruitment continued to be high caste Brahmins and Rajputs from Bengal, Bihar and Oudh, although the eight regular cavalry regiments consisted mainly of Muslim Pathan sowars. During the 1840s and early 1850s numbers of Nepalese Gurkhas and Jatsikhs from the Punjab were however accepted in the Bengal Army. Both Gurkhas and Jatsikhs served in separate units but some of the latter were incorporated into existing Bengal infantry regiments.

Another innovation introduced prior to 1845 was to designate specific regiments as "Volunteers" – that is recruited for general service, with sepoys who had accepted a commitment for possible overseas duty. Recruits for the Bengal Army who were prepared to travel by ship if required, received a special allowance or batta. Two of these BNI regiments were serving in China in 1857 and so escaped any involvement in the great rebellion of that year.

A total of 64 Bengal Army regular infantry and cavalry regiments rebelled during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, or were disbanded after their continued loyalty was considered doubtful. From 1858 onwards the actual high-caste Awadhi, Bengali and Bihari Hindu presence in the Bengal Army was reduced because of their perceived primary role as "mutineers" in the 1857 rebellion. The new and less homogeneous Bengal Army was essentially drawn from Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Baluchis and Pathans, although twelve of the pre-mutiny Bengal line infantry regiments continued in service with the same basis of recruitment, traditions and uniform colours as before.

A largely unspoken rationale was that an army of diverse origins was unlikely to unite in rebellion.

End of the separate Bengal Army

In 1895 the three separate Presidency Armies began a process of unification which was not to be concluded until the Kitchener reforms of eight years later. As an initial step the Army of India was divided into four commands, each commanded by a lieutenant-general. These comprised Bengal, Bombay, Madras and Punjab. In 1903 the separately numbered regiments of the Bombay, Madras and Bengal Armies were unified in a single organisational sequence and the presidency affiliations disappeared.

Madras Army

Establishment and early history

The Madras Army of the Honourable East India Company came into being through the need to protect the Company's commercial interests. These were mostly untrained guards, with only some bearing arms. The French attack and capture of Madras in 1746 forced the British hand. In 1757, the British decided to raise well-trained military units to conduct operations, conquer territory, and force allegiance from local rulers.

The loosely organised military units were later combined into battalions with Indian officers commanding local troops. One of the first major actions fought by these troops was in the battle of Wandiwash in 1760. The troops were highly praised for their steadiness under fire. Earlier a good part of the force was sent to Bengal under young Clive, who made history and a personal fortune after the Battle of Plassey.

The 1st Madras Pioneers. 1890

The Queen's Own Madras Sappers and Miners, 1896

The Madras Army officers were in the early years very conscious of the soldiers' local customs, caste rituals, dress, and social hierarchy. Some leading landowners joined the Madras Army, one of whom is recorded as Mootoo Nayak from the nobility in Madura. As the army expanded and new officers came in, mostly from Company sources, the leadership style and care of the men changed for the worse. The most famous incident in the Madras Army was the Vellore mutiny. Looting was an

organised activity among the East India Company officers. Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington, was in the Seringapatnam battle. In keeping with the times, he laid down the share of every officer and sepoy from the loot that was organised after Tipu was killed. The defeat of Hyder Ali and the death of Tipu with the most widespread looting of Seringapatnam rankled with Indians at all levels. After Tipu Sultan was killed, his two sons were held in British custody in Vellore Fort. On the night of 10 July 1806 the sepoys of three Madras regiments garrisoning Vellore Fort mutinied, killing 129 British officers and soldiers. The rising, caused by a mixture of military and political grievances, was suppressed within hours by a force which included loyal Madras cavalry.

In the 1830s the Madras Army was concerned with internal security and support for the civil administration. This was a multi-ethnic army in which the British officers were encouraged to learn and speak Asian languages. In 1832–33 superior discipline and training enabled the Madras Army put down a rebellion in the Visakhapatnam district.

Under the British Raj

The Army of the Madras Presidency remained almost unaffected by the Indian Rebellion of 1857. By contrast with the larger Bengal Army where all but twelve (out of eighty-four) infantry and cavalry regiments either mutinied or were disbanded, all fifty-two regiments of Madras Native Infantry remained unaffected and passed into the new Indian Army when direct British Crown rule replaced that of the Honourable East India Company. Four regiments of Madras Light Cavalry and the Madras Artillery batteries did however disappear in the post-1858 reorganisation of all three of the Presidency Armies. The Madras Fusiliers (a regiment of European infantry recruited by the East India Company for service in India) was transferred to the regular British Army.

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Bombay Army

It was established in 1662 and governed by the East India Company until the Government of India Act 1858 transferred all presidencies to the direct authority of the British Crown. On 1 April 1895 the army was incorporated into the newly created Indian Army, and became known as the Bombay Command until 1908

The Mahars served in both Bombay Army and Marine battalions. Prior to the Indian Rebellion of 1857 they were heavily recruited and constituted between a fifth and a quarter of the entire Bombay Army.

By 1783 the Bombay Army had grown to 15,000 men, a force that was still significantly smaller than the other two Presidency armies. Recruitment from the 1750s on had however been expanded to include a majority of indigenous sepoys, initially employed as irregulars for particular campaigns. The

first two regular sepoy battalions were raised in 1768, a third in 1760 and a fourth ten years later. The non-Indian element was organized in a single Bombay European Regiment.

In 1796 the Bombay Native Infantry was reorganized into four regiments, each of two battalions. The Bombay Foot Artillery, which traced its history back nearly 50 years prior to this date, was brought up to six companies in strength in 1797.

The Bombay Army was heavily involved in the First Maratha War and the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore in 1799.

Native Officers of the Bombay Army in dress uniform, 1818

Prior to the cessation of Company rule in 1861, the Bombay Army played a substantial role in campaigns against the Bani Bu Ali in 1821, in North-Western India, notably the 1st Afghan War of 1838–1842, the Sind War of 1843, the 2nd Sikh War of 1848–49 and the Persian War of 1856–57. The Bombay Army had acquired responsibility for garrisoning Aden, and The 1st Bombay European Regiment, The Bombay Marine Battalion and the 24th Bombay Native Infantry all saw service there in 1839.

The Bombay Garrison

The Poona Division - Headquartered in Poona

The Bombay native infantry establishment continued to expand until it reached 26 regiments in 1845. Three Bombay Light Cavalry regiments were raised after 1817, plus a few troops of irregular horse. One brigade of Bombay Horse Artillery comprising both British and Indian personnel had been established by 1845, plus three battalions of foot artillery.[3]

The Indian Rebellion of 1857 was almost entirely confined to the Bengal Army. Of the thirty-two Bombay infantry regiments in existence at the time only two mutinied. After some initial uncertainty as to the loyalty of the remainder, it was deemed possible to send most of the British troops in the Presidency to Bengal, while the Bombay sepoy and sowar units held the southern districts of the North-West Frontier. Some Bombay units saw active service during the repression of the rebellion in Central India.

The Bombay Presidency's Army was also supplemented by regular British Army Regiments and in 1842 one cavalry and four infantry regiments were deployed on the "Bombay Establishment".

Following the transfer of HEIC rule to that of the British government in 1861 the Bombay Army underwent a series of changes. These included the disbandment of three regiments of Bombay Native Infantry and the recruitment of replacement units from the Beluchi population. Originally created as irregular units, the three "Belooch" regiments in their red trousers were to remain a conspicuous part of the Bombay Army for the remainder of its separate existence.

By 1864 the Bombay Army had been reorganised as follows:

With brigades at Bombay, Belgaum, Neemuch, Poona, Ahmednuggur, Nusseerabad and Deesa; as well as a garrison in Aden. During the remainder of the 19th century Bombay Army units participated in the 1868 Expedition to Abyssinia, the Second Afghan War of 1878–80, and the Third Anglo-Burmese War of 1885–87.

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Topic:2 FIRST INDIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1857-CAUSES

Immediate Reason of Revolt of 1857

The immediate factor was the introduction of the 'Enfield' rifle. The cartridge had to be bitten off before loading it into the gun. Indian sepoy soldiers believed that the cartridge was greased with either pig fat or made from cow fat. This was against the Hindu and Muslim sentiments and religious ideologies. Thus they were reluctant to use the 'Enfield' rifle. This was a flashpoint to enrage the soldiers against the Britishers. This was believed to be the .

Causes of Revolt of 1857

The revolt of 1857 was initiated due to various factors which are stated below:

- Religious & Social Causes – racism or racial discrimination was believed to be a major reason for the revolt of 1857 wherein Indians were exploited and were kept away from mixing with Europeans. The whites also started interfering in the religious and cultural affairs of Indians and tortured them as well.
- Political Causes – The British expansion had led to the propagation of unjust policies that led to the loss of power of the Nawabs and Zamindars residing at various places of India. The introduction of unfair policies like the policy of Trade and Commerce, the policy of indirect subordination (the policy of war and annexation, the policy of direct subordination the policy of misgovernance (through which Awadh was annexed) greatly hampered the interests of the rulers of the native states, and they one by one became victims of British expansionism. Therefore, those rulers, who lost their states to the British, were naturally against the British and took sides against them during the revolt.
- Economic Factors -There were various reforms in the taxation and revenue system that affected the peasants' heavily. British Government had imposed and introduced various administrative policies to expand their territory.

These three settlements were highly exploitative, and in particular, the Permanent settlement had created a devastating impact. Thus the peasants were greatly encouraged to overthrow the British Government from India and led to their active participation in the revolt of 1857.

Military Factors – The Indian soldiers faced a lot of discrimination from the British officials with respect

to their salaries, pensions, promotions. Indians were subjugated in the military while their European counterparts faced no such discrimination. This led to discontent and was a major military factor that resulted in the revolt of 1857.

Vellore Mutiny

It took place even before the revolt of 1857 (50 years before). It erupted on 10th July 1806 in Vellore, present-day Tamil Nadu, and lasted only for a day, but it was brutal and it was the first major mutiny by the Indian sepoys in the East India Company.

Impact of Revolt of 1857

The revolt of 1857 shook the foundation of British East India Company and disclosed their inefficiency in handling the Indian administration. The major impact was the introduction of Government of India act which abolished the rule of British East India Company and marked the beginning of British raj that bestowed powers in the hands of the British government to rule India directly through representatives.

Causes of Failure of the revolt of 1857

The revolt was eventually not successful in ousting the British from the country because of several factors.

1. The sepoys lacked one clear leader; there were several. They also did not have a coherent plan by which the foreigners would be routed.
2. Indian rulers who aided the revolt did not envision any plan for the country after the British were defeated.
3. Majorly northern India was affected by this revolt. The three presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras remained mostly unaffected. The Sikh soldiers also did not take part in the rebellion.

List of Important Leaders associated with the revolt of 1857

Place	Revolt of 1857 -Important Leaders
Delhi	Bahadur Shah II, General Bakht Khan
Lucknow	Begum Hazrat Mahal, Birjis Qadir, Ahmadullah
Kanpur	Nana Sahib, Rao Sahib, Tantia Tope, Azimullah Khan
Jhansi	Rani Laxmibai
Bihar	Kunwar Singh, Amar Singh
Rajasthan	Jaidayal Singh and Hardayal Singh

Farrukhabad	Tufzal Hasan Khan
Assam	Kandapreshwar Singh, Maniram Dutta Baruah
Orissa	Surendra Shahi, Ujjwal Shahi

SOME EVENTS OF 1857 WAR :

War of Independence is an important landmark in the history of Sub-Continent. This War was fought in 1857 by Indians against the British in order to get rid of their domination. It is also given names as Indian Rebellion, Indian Mutiny as well as Indian Revolt. The main causes of the War were political, social, economical, military and religious. It was an extreme effort made by Indians, but they failed due to certain reasons including mutual jealousies, disunity, and lack of central leadership etc.

This war was not spread throughout India but it was limited to few areas mainly Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow etc. The main event which became the immediate cause of the war was the refusal of the Sepoys to use the grease covered cartridges (greased with fat of pig and cow) on January 23, 1857. At the same time, an Indian sepoy killed two British officers at Barrackpore, when he was forced to use greased cartridges. He was arrested and hanged to death on April 8, 1857. This news spread as fast as jungle fire.

Meerut

On 6th May, 1857 A.D. 85 out of 90 Indian soldiers at Meerut refused to bite the greased cartridges with their teeth. These 85 soldiers were court-martialled and imprisoned for 10 years. They were stripped off their uniforms in the presence of the entire Indian crowd. It was too much of a disgrace and this incident sent a wave of indignation. On 10th May 1857, the Indian soldiers at Meerut broke into open revolt. They released their companions and murdered a few European officers. On the night of 10th May the mutineers marched to Delhi and reached there on 11th May.

Delhi

The revolutionaries reached from Meerut to Delhi on 11th May, 1857 and the small British garrison at Delhi was not able to resist and consequently fell into their hands within 2 days. The Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was proclaimed Emperor of India. In order to regain Delhi, Sir John Lawrence sent a strong British force commanded by John Nicholson. After a long siege of four months, the British recovered Delhi in September 1857 A.D. The Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was captured, his two sons and a grandson were shot dead before his eyes and he was sent to Rangoon where he died in the year 1862

A. D.

Kanpur

At Kanpur the struggle for Independence was led by Nana Sahib Dondu Pant (The adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II). A number of British fell into his hands and he showed great kindness to them. But when he heard about inhuman attitude of Gen. O'Neil towards Indians, he became very furious and killed all the British. General Havelock captured Kanpur after defeating Nana Sahib in a hotly

contested battle on June 17, 1857. Later on Nana Sahib, with the help of Tantya Topi, recaptured Kanpur in November, 1857 but not for a long time and British defeated them once again in a fierce war from December 1 to 6, 1857. Nana Sahib fled towards Nepal, where he probably died, while Tantya Tope migrated to Kalpi.

Lucknow

The struggle for independence at Lucknow was led by Nawab, Wajid Ali Shah. The Chief Commissioner, Sir Henry Lawrence, sought refuge with 1000 English and 700 Indian soldiers inside the Residency. The Indians did not make any concession and killed most of the Englishmen, including Sir Henry Lawrence and the notorious English General O'Neil. At last, the Commander-in-Chief General Collin Campbell, marched towards Lucknow and captured it after a fierce battle in March 1858.

Jhansi and Gwalior

The leader of the revolutionaries in Central India was Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi. General Sir Hugh Rose attacked Jhansi in March 1858 but the brave Rani Laxmi Bai kept the British General unnerved for quite some time. She with the help of Tantya Tope created problems for the British troops. Both fought many successful battles against the British. A fierce battle was fought between the British and the revolutionaries under Rani Laxmi Bai and Tantya Tope from June 11 to June 18, 1858 A. D. But the personal valour of Rani and Tantya Tope could not match the resources at the command of the British. Tantya Tope was betrayed by the Gwalior Chief Man Singh and fell into the hands of the British. He was subsequently hanged on April 18, 1859.

Bihar

In Bihar, the Revolt was led by Kunwar Singh, a zamindar of Jagdishpur. Though he was eighty years old, he played a prominent part in the revolt. He fought the British in Bihar and then joined Nana Sahib's forces and took part in various encounters with the English in Oudh and Central India. He died on April 27, 1858, leaving behind a glorious record of valour and bravery.

Conclusion:

Most of the European historians have pointed out that it was a revolt of Indian soldiers who were offended at the use of greased cartridges. In their opinion, the discontented sepoys were incited by the landlords and the deposed native princes and the people of India were not directly involved in this rebellion. They further assert that it was not a national war of independence, in as much as the revolt was confined to a particular region and not to the whole of India; large areas like the Punjab, Sind and Rajputana remained unaffected. It was admittedly a great and courageous effort by patriotic Indians to get rid of the foreign domination. It was a glorious landmark in our history in as much as Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder to win back their lost independence. One cannot but admire the patriotic spirit of boatmen of Lucknow who refused to carry British soldiers across the river. The sepoys and the people fought gallantly up to the very end. Though the revolt was unsuccessful, the spirit of the people remained unshaken. The revolt left an impression on the minds of the Indian people and thus paved the way for the rise of a strong national movement.