

Political Causes of 1857 War

Introduction

The War of Independence (1857) was the first large-scale uprising against the British in India. It was caused by multiple factors—political, economic, social, military, and religious. Among these, **political causes** were central because they directly attacked the **power and dignity of Indian rulers and princes**.

Doctrine of Lapse

Lord Dalhousie's **Doctrine of Lapse** was one of the most important political causes. According to this policy, if a ruler died without a natural son, the British would annex the state. Adopted sons were not recognized as heirs. States like **Satara, Jhansi, and Nagpur** were annexed in this way. This was seen as a **direct attack on Indian traditions**, and rulers like **Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi** became fierce opponents of British rule.

Annexation of Awadh

The annexation of **Awadh in 1856** was another major cause. The British accused the Nawab of misrule, removed him from power, and took control of the state. This action angered not only the Nawab but also the **nobility, soldiers, peasants, and artisans** who depended on the court. Thousands of people lost their jobs, lands, and pensions. Awadh later became one of the strongest centers of the revolt.

Disrespect Towards Rulers

Even rulers who remained loyal were treated with disrespect. The British reduced them to mere figureheads with no real power. Their kingdoms were interfered with, and they were humiliated in front of their subjects. This **loss of prestige and authority** created anger among rulers and their followers, who felt betrayed by British promises.

Summary of Political Grievances

In short, the political causes of the War of Independence included the **Doctrine of Lapse**, the **annexation of Awadh**, and the general **disrespect towards Indian rulers**. These policies not only destroyed the power of Indian princes but also hurt their pride and traditions. Together with social, military, and economic discontent, these political grievances provided the spark for the great uprising of 1857.