

What brought about the upheavels of 1857 in india essay

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The upheavals of 1857 was a protest against the British by the Indians, and was known as India's first war of independence, and challenged colonial rule during the few months of the nineteenth century. There were many reasons that led up to the upheavals of 1857. There was a lot of military mutiny and resistance in early colonial India, but were rather uncoordinated. It all started when the British started adding a number of new provocations. The refusal of units to fight in Burma led to the passage of the General Service Enlistment Act of 1856, which required recruits to serve abroad, across the kala pani which means dark waters.

Hindu tradition states that those who travel on kala pani will lose their caste and be outside the Hindu community. The soldiers were not happy because of their deployment to Burma, because they did not want to be caste outside their hindu community. The Afghan debacle where low castes were recruited, had also led the British to widen the circle of caste and regional groups from which they recruited into the Bengal Army, like the Rajputs and Brahmans. Also after the conquest of Punjab and Sind these soldiers lost their bhatta which means pay bonuses for services they performed abroad. Later on they also lost their prestige with the Annexation of Awadh in 1856.

Agrarian protests was another important part of the revolt. The loss of landed rights and money to urban traders led to discontent for the British. The British agrarian policy created trouble, and became unavoidable against zamindari and landholders who could not pay on time.

This caused thousands of families and individuals to be thrown out of their estates and farms. Also due to heavy rates on land, many of the poor people

could not afford and, therefore, were evicted from the land, because the British revenue demand was arbitrary and high. What I mean is that the British used heavy taxation for almost everything in India. Property and all sorts of goods were so heavily taxed that it was almost hard for peasants to afford anything. The zamindari system was introduced by the British and caused the peasants more trouble. Social intervention also came into play with the decline of their political clout and honor in relation to other neighboring clans and communities. Different groups of people got together and fought such as the taluqdar magnates, village zamindari, tenant farmers, peasant proprietors and tribal communities all participated in one area or another during the revolt. When the British introduced the British ' Doctrine of Lapse.

' This doctrine allowed the British to control Indian princes by forbidding the inheritance of states by persons who were not natural heirs, and controlled them like puppets. This doctrine led to several states such as Udaipur, Jhansi and Nagpur and, Oudh to come into British control. Also the British created the policy of excluding Indians from high civil and military offices and from having a real role in the running of India, because they looked down upon Indians and separated themselves as superiors from Indians. Religion also played a big role in the mutiny of 1857. Both Hindu and Muslim leaders feared that the British intended to replace their traditional customs and religions with Christianity. In 1856 The British came up with the Religious Disabilities Act which suppressed certain practices such as child marriage, and granting permission for the remarriage of widows. This caused

a lot of trouble for the British because they were interfering with old religious practices. The unrestricted entry of Christian missionaries that was permitted under the Charter Act, especially in prisons, orphanages and the army, at the same time was perceived as threatening.

Worse was the introduction of the new greased cartridges. This was sacrilegious to Hindus and Muslims both, and triggered the mutiny. The success of the Indian freedom fighters helped the War of Independence.

The Indian army captured the important towns, but still the British forces at Meerut and Ambala put up a resolute resistance to the royal army and held them back for several months. The British proved to be superior with weapons and had a better strategy. The freedom fighters badly lacked in adequate resources and their planning proved to be extremely brittle. The royal forces were finally defeated.

The British quickly regained control, and took revenge by killing innocent people and creating a massacre of the inhabitants of Calcutta. Some of India's princely rulers were controlled by the East India Company, and if such a prince failed to cooperate with the company, the company might dispose of him and annex his territory, ousting him from power using the Indian troops that it employed. They felt threatened by the turn of events, so they used the help of the princes.

The betrayal by a number of rulers such as the Sikh princes, the Rajasthan princes and Maratha rulers allowed the British to gain control. During the rebellion the British government took control of India from the East India

Company. Another factor that helped the British regain control of the rising of 1857 was the superior weaponry and brutality of the British in defending their empire. It would be hard to characterize this upheaval because there were so many causes behind it. Though I believe it was a mixture of a forward looking freedom movement and a holy war, or a jihad.

The British were interfering with their religion to much. The greased cartridges was the last straw that had them fighting. India wanted Independence from British because they finally realized how the British only wanted to control them. It got more worse after they started to interfere with their sacred religious views, like trying to abolish sati, which is when the widow burns herself with her husband.

I think that if the 1857 revolt didn't happen then the unity that came about with the Hindu's and Muslim's wouldn't have been possible. They fought side by side to get rid of the British. Due to armed revolts being brutally suppressed by the British and lacking the firepower of the British weaponry and the rebels were defeated. They lacked the means of communication that the British had. Bibliography Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004) Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy (London: Routledge, 2nd Edn., 2004)