

The causes of the indian mutiny



Assess the causes of the Indian Mutiny Throughout the Indian Mutiny there were numerous factors, mainly due to British imperialism, that caused and had significant impact on the Indian nation. Through the course of the Indian Mutiny economic, Cultural, Armies and the Enfield rifle incident caused the Indian Mutiny. These factors bundled together and impacted together which contributed to widespread uprising and the India Mutiny. British Imperialism caused economic and political strain on the Indian Community, which in turn placed the British already on thin ice with the Indians.

The Doctrine of the lapse caused many incidences and was the first reason, of many, for the Indian Mutiny to begin. Under British rule the doctrine was introduced which declared that the lands of any Indian Ruler who died without a natural heir it would be forfeited to the Company. This frustrated numerous Indian princes and land owners. Which lead them to join the sepoys in the Indian Mutiny. The taking of Oudh played a significant role in the contribution of the anger towards the British Rule. Governor Dalhousie annexed 250, 000 square miles of land known as Oudh.

To consolidate control in his new territory he introduced rail and road systems and postal and telegraph systems. This aggravated the Indians and only added to the frustration and retaliation necessity of the Indians. Along with this, heavy taxes were levied onto the Indian people. The amount taxed was more than the crops were worth on that land. In addition tolls were inflicted for the use of river ferries. The land revenue system introduced by the company ruined many peasant farmers. The anxiety and pressure that these economic and political elements contributed to the British demise.

Through the spread of Christianity and the spread of religious customs and traditions heightened the emotions of the Indians. This spread of Christianity was the greatest concern for Indians; with the arrival of missionaries this created much unease amongst the Indians. Christians disrespected and had little knowledge for the Hindi and Muslim religions. Originally the British promised not to impose their beliefs but it soon was gossiped that the British wish to convert the Indians, and western influences were brought to India. William Bentinck a Christian missionary rought reforms such as the abolition of child marriage and the suppression of Sati (burning of wives after their husband has passed) this convinced many Indians of Christianity being imposed on Hindu or Muslim Indians. This outraged and added to the British problems and ultimately led Indian civilians and sepoys to uprising against them. The Indian sepoys were largely victimised, as they had lack of promotions, low wages and had many threats to their caste made. Most sepoys were high-caste Hindus used to wealth and within the army and civil service it was extremely difficult to achieve promotions and high wages.

The major concern within the army was caste. It rumoured through the sepoy regiments that the British were intentionally trying to make them lose their caste. There was talk of magical chapattis (yeast-less bread) that had been poisoned by the company. The Enfield rifle cartridge was also a major caste incident. This was short term factors that lead to the sepoys gathering and revolting against the British. Problems arose when a new Enfield rifle was introduced to replace and old rifle known as the musket.

In order to load the Enfield rifle the end of the cartridge has to be bitten off the cartridge and then the cartridge rammed down the muzzle to fire. To

make the bullet easier to ram down, the cartridge was heavily greased with animal fat. A rumour circulated that the fat was a mixture of cow and pig fat, cows are sacred to Hindus and pigs regarded unclean as a Muslim, biting this cartridge would break the caste of the Hindu sepoy and defile the Muslims. The British quickly stated that the grease was oil or bee's wax.

However the sepoy still distrusted the Company and the British word meant little to them now. The economic, political, force of religious beliefs and threats to caste added together on top of each other which led to the British Company toppling over and crumbling. The British interference with religion and traditions that have been practised for centuries and it was this interference which led to the discontent of Indian sepoy that ultimately led to the conflict. Britain's attempt to conquer India was the cause of the rebellion and the Indian Mutiny.